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Glass man and the golden bird

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HUNGARIAN FOLK AND FAIRY TALES

The Glass Man and the Golden Bird

RUTH MANNING-SANDERS

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The Wonderful Tree

You must know there was a king who had a very beautiful daughter, and he gave her a garden to walk about in. And in this garden was a tree whose branches reached to heaven. So one day when the princess was in the garden, there comes a whirlwind; and the whirlwind lifts the princess and carries her off, no one knows where.

The king was waiting for his dear little daughter to come and sit down to dinner with him; but she didn't come. Where was she? Nobody knew. They went rummaging through the palace—couldn't find her. So the king ran out into the garden, calling. No answer. She wasn't there. She wasn't anywhere.

What did the king do? He tore his hair, he stamped, raved, shed tears, tears, tears. What use in that? No use at all. So he sent out his drummer boys: *Ran, tan, tan! Dub-a-dub-dub!*— 'Whoever finds the princess and brings her back shall have her to wife and half the kingdom with her!'

After that, you may be sure, there were plenty of gallant young fellows travelling helter-skelter all over the kingdom, searching for the princess. Only they didn't find her.

Now the king had a swineherd called Jack, and he was a lad with a heart of gold. But he didn't go looking for the princess, because he had his pigs to mind. And there was a pigling lying in a corner of the sty, and the pigling had a fever, all hot, very dreadful. So Jack took a sponge, and dipped the sponge in clear, cold well-water, and sponged that pigling all over and all over till he felt better, and opened his little eyes and stood up on his four little legs.

Says the pigling, 'Thank you, Jack! Now I'm going to help you find the princess.'

'Well,' says Jack, 'I should like to do that, because it would make the king happy, and the king is a good master to me.'

The pigling snuffled in the straw. He was scraping up the straw, looking for something. And when he brought out what he was looking for, it was a pair of boots. Then he scraped again, and brought out another pair of boots, and set it by the first pair. And as if that wasn't enough, he goes on with his snuffling and scraping till he has seven pairs of boots all standing in a row.

'Here you are, Jack!'

'Thank you, pigling! But what should I do with seven pairs of boots? One is enough for any man.'

'Seven you shall have, and seven you will need,' says pigling.

Then he scrapes in the straw again, and brings out a napkin.

'Here you are, Jack!'

'Thank you, pigling! But what should I do with a napkin? I don't dine at the king's table!'

'Well, wherever you dine, you have to eat, haven't you?' says pigling. 'You're going a long way, Jack. You're going to

travel for seven days and seven nights. You're going up to the very top of that tree whose branches reach to heaven, for the princess is on the top of that tree, held prisoner by a dragon with nine heads. And it's you that's going to kill the dragon and bring her down, Jack.'

'Ho! So you say! But killing dragons isn't the sort of work I'm used to.'

'Never mind for that,' says pigling. 'You'll manage it, if you do as I tell you. Now put on one pair of boots, sling the others round your neck, put the napkin in your pocket, and up into the tree with you! Seven days and seven nights you'll be climbing, and every day you'll wear out a pair of boots. Keep your eyes ever on the next branch above you, climb and climb, and stay only when hunger bids you. Then spread out the napkin on a leaf, and it will supply you with food. When you get to the top of the tree, you'll see a leaf much larger than all the rest. Step onto that leaf, and you'll find yourself in the dragon's country. My brother is a flying horse in the service of the dragon: when you meet him he'll tell you what else you must do. Good luck go with you, Jack! When we meet again, it's your Royal Highness I'll be calling you.'

So Jack bids good-bye to pigling and swings himself up into the tree. Up he goes from branch to branch for seven days and seven nights, and never stops climbing except when he's hungry. Then he spreads out the napkin on a leaf, and there is bread and meat and a bottle of wine to put heart into him. So he ate and drank and climbed on.

He climbed so hard and so fast that every day he wore out a pair of boots, took them off, cast them from him, and put on another pair. And on the eighth morning, when all the boots were worn out, there he was on the top of the tree. He was high above the clouds now, with nothing to see but the blue sky spread out over him; and feeling giddy, you're sure, for the tree rocked in the wind, and there was nothing to cling hold to but small twigs.

Then he saw, close to his feet, a very large leaf, smooth and flat, like a green tray, and it was fairly rolling in the wind.

'Heaven help me!' thinks Jack. 'If I step onto that leaf, won't I find myself back where I came from, and with a package of broken bones into the bargain?'

But step onto that leaf, he did—and where did he find himself? In the dragon's country, just as pigling had told him. So he walks on along a broad road, until he comes to a magnificent garden; and into that garden he goes, and up to a golden castle that stands in the middle of it.

The gates of the castle were open, and so were all the doors. Jack went in.

'Anyone at home?'

No answer.

Jack went on from room to room. He went through all the rooms, downstairs and up; and in the very last room he came to—there was the princess sitting on a stool and weeping bitter tears.

'Don't cry, my pretty,' says Jack. 'I've come to set you free.'

'Oh Jack, Jack,' says she, 'but the dragon will eat you!'

'Well, if he does, he does,' says Jack. 'But I hope he won't.'

So then the dragon comes in—and isn't he furious? He's blowing flames out of the eighteen nostrils of his nine heads and bawling out, 'How dare you come here? I'll eat you, I will!'

But the princess ran to him and said, 'My dearest, dearest dragon, what an idea! Ruin your royal appetite by eating such a skinny little low-down wretch! He'd certainly give you indigestion. A swineherd is no food for a noble dragon. I've got a nice supper ready for you. You come and eat that, and put the swineherd out in the sties where he belongs. You want a stable boy, don't you? Well, here he is. Come, stop blowing out flames, and I'll give you a kiss.'

'Nine kisses?' says the dragon.

'Eighteen,' says the princess. 'One for each cheek.'

So the dragon stopped blowing out flames and the princess gave him eighteen kisses. Now every one of the dragon's nine mouths is smirking horribly. But soon he flies into another rage, rushes at Jack and bawls, 'Get out!'

He knocked Jack down with a swish of his tail, and the princess laughed. 'Bravo, dragon,' says she, 'that's the way to treat him!' But she stooped and whispered in Jack's ear, 'Run into the stable quickly!'

Did Jack run? I tell you, he did! He was glad enough to go.

In the stable there was only one horse, and that was a thin black skinny one. It was so old and weak, poor thing, that it couldn't stand on its legs. Jack made a straw bed for himself, spread out his napkin, and had a good supper. He carried a loaf of bread over to the horse; but the horse shut its eyes and said, 'Not for me, thank you, Jack.' And then they both fell asleep.

In the morning the dragon comes clattering into the stable, and boxes Jack's ears with his tail. 'Now then you, look alive! You see that old screw lying on the straw there?'

'Yes, I see him.'

'Well then, you just tend him carefully. Give him oats and hay, as much as he can eat, morning and evening. But should he get a whim into his head to ask for anything else, don't you give it him. Oats and hay, Jack, morning and evening—nothing else. Do you hear me, or shall I box your ears again!'

'I hear you, master.'

The dragon went away then. He spread his scaly wings and flew off into the sky. Jack found a bin full of oats, and a rack full of hay. He filled a bucket with oats, and set it down before the horse; and brought him, too, an armful of hay.

'Come old fellow, eat up!'

'The horse said, 'Not for me, thank you, Jack. That's not what I need. I know what you've come for, and I'll help you. But I need red-hot coals to put me on my feet. The dragon won't give me that. He wants me to die, lest I betray his secrets.'

'Well, well,' says Jack. 'I think you must be pigling's brother?'

'So I am, Jack. Now fetch me a shovel full of burning coal.'

Jack went to the kitchen and came back with a shovel full of red-hot coal. The horse swallowed down the coal. What happens? He leaps to his feet, and shakes himself once. He turns into a golden horse, strong, young, splendid. He shakes himself again. Now he has wings.

Says he, 'Go into the coach-house, Jack. Fetch the saddle and bridle you'll find hanging on the wall, and the sword that hangs behind the door.'

Jack went into the coach-house and found the saddle and the bridle and the sword. He was coming out carrying these things when he heard a clanging overhead, and there was the dragon coming back. Jack ran so fast then, to get into the stable, that the sword got between his feet and tripped him up. He drops the sword, the dragon pounces down, and there he is now standing in the courtyard, swishing his tail and breathing out flames.

'Ha! Ha! Jack! So you've disobeyed me! Now I shall eat you!'

Says Jack, 'Master, have pity! I won't disobey you again!'

'You won't get the chance, Jack. But it's thirsty work eating skinny little wretches like you. I must drink first. Go in, and fetch me nine bowls of wine.'

Jack runs into the castle. In the hall he meets the princess. She has been listening behind the door. She fetched the nine bowls of wine, and dropped a sleepy draught into each one of them.

'Jack,' says she, 'we'll beat him yet!'

Jack carries out the bowls and sets them down before the dragon. The dragon drinks: his nine heads roll round on their nine necks; his eighteen eyes blink and glaze. 'Now I shall eat you,' he mumbles. But his legs give way under him. He falls down in the courtyard, sound asleep.

Jack ran to pick up the sword. The golden horse looked out of the stable.

'What are you about, Jack?'

Says Jack, 'To cut off the dragon's heads, and kill him.'

Says the horse, 'No, no, you can't kill him that way! As fast as you cut head from neck, that head and neck will join together again. But look about you—do you see that wood of oak-trees over there?'

'Yes, I see it.'

'In that wood there is a boar, and in the boar's head there is a hare. In the hare's head there is a box, and in the box are nine wasps. The nine wasps are the nine lives of the dragon. So saddle and bridle me, Jack, take the sword, up with you on my back, and we'll be off to the wood.'

Jack saddled and bridled the golden horse. He took his sword and leaped into the saddle. The golden horse spread his golden wings and flew to the oak-tree wood.

The boar was under the oaks, scuffling up acorns with its snout. When it saw Jack and the horse it foamed with rage and rushed upon them. But the horse gives a kick of his golden hoof, the boar tumbles down, and Jack cuts off its head with the sword.

Out of the boar's head springs a hare, and flees away. The golden horse crashes through the wood after it. Hop! Hop! The hare doubles and twists and flees on. Jack and the horse had a long, sore chase; but they caught up with it at last, and Jack cut off its head.

Out of the hare's head drops an iron box, and from the box comes an angry buzzing. Jack rests the box on a stone, the golden horse gives a stamp with his golden hoof; he crushes the box to powder, and the buzzing stops.

Then came a yell that echoed from earth to heaven. The oak-trees shuddered and swayed, and their leaves fell down like rain.

'The nine wasps are dead, Jack,' says the horse. 'And so I think is the dragon.'

They fly back to the castle. The dragon is still lying in the courtyard. But he is not asleep now; he is dead.

The princess came out of the castle; she ran to Jack, Jack ran to her. They hugged each other and laughed and cried. There was no doubting that they loved one another.

But they can't stay up there in the dragon's country forever, and Jack gets gooseflesh at the thought of carrying the princess down that tree. What is he to do? He can't think.

'I know what's troubling you, Jack,' said the golden horse. 'But what are my wings for? Up on my back, the both of you; shut your eyes, and don't open them till I tell you.'

So Jack and the princess got up on the horse's back and shut their eyes tight. The horse spread his wings; he flew up; then he flew down. In a quarter of an hour he said, 'Open!' Jack and the princess open their eyes, and there they are, in the princess's garden, at the foot of the tree. Pigling is there, standing on his hind legs and grinning from ear to ear; and the golden horse has his nose down and is nibbling pigling's neck in brotherly fashion.

Well, after that, of course Jack married the princess and got half the kingdom, with the promise of the whole of it in time to come. The pigling was given a golden sty in the princess's garden, and the horse a golden stable next to the sty.

Jack, princess, pigling and golden horse—they were all four of them happy.

The Seven Simons

Once upon a time there was a great emperor who felt himself to be so clever and so handsome that nowhere in the world could he find a wife worthy of him. This vexed him sorely, and he became irritable and mopish.

So one day as he sat in his palace and looked out on the sea, he saw a great ship coming into the harbour. And in the ship were merchants, widely travelled men who had seen all the wonders of the world.

The emperor sent for the merchants, and said to them, 'Look on me, my friends, you who are so widely travelled and have seen all the wonders of the world. You will observe, of course, that I am exceedingly handsome; and I assure you that I am exceedingly clever. Now tell me, have you ever, in all your travels, met with a princess so very clever and so very beautiful that I need not be ashamed to take her for my wife?'

No, no, no, the merchants said, never had they met with such a princess!

The emperor was pleased with their answer, and not pleased. It flattered his vanity, and yet—he owed it to his people to marry *some*one! First he smiled; then he frowned. And his frown made the merchants tremble.

So then the oldest of the merchants said, 'My liege, I have heard, but I have not seen.'

Said the emperor, 'What have you heard?'

'I have heard that across seven times seven seas, in the Island of Busan, there dwells a mighty king. This king has a daughter whose beauty outshines the sun, and who is so clever that the wisest philosophers seem but prattling infants in her presence. But it would take the swiftest ship in the world ten years to reach that island; and so, my emperor, the princess is no bride for you.'

'And pray why not?' snapped the emperor.

'Consider, my liege: ten years to reach that island, ten years to return—twenty years before the bride could arrive here. Would she not have grown old in the meantime? And though her wit might yet sparkle, assuredly her beauty would be dimmed.'

'Yes, yes, that is so, I see your point,' said the emperor. And he dismissed the merchants, and went on being irritable and mopish.

So then, to divert him, his courtiers arranged a hunting party. *Yoicks! So-ho!* Off they all go: huntsmen blowing their horns, falconers with hawk on wrist, hounds baying, horses galloping, pennons waving, the emperor charging ahead on a magnificent stallion, cupbearers and butlers bringing up the rear with a bouncing, floundering wagon loaded with good things to eat and drink.

At noonday the party halted for lunch under a green hedge. Before them, as far as eye could see, stretched a great field of ripe maize. The maize swayed and glittered in the sun and wind, as if the whole of that great field was a sheet of glancing gold.

The emperor gazed at the field and said, 'If every field in my kingdom were as well dug and planted as this field, my kingdom would be rich indeed, and all my people well fed. Go, someone, and find out to whom the field belongs.'

Off galloped a squire to do the emperor's bidding. Soon he came to a spick and span farm-house. On a bench by the door of the farm-house sat seven peasants in red shirts, munching rye bread and drinking water: strong, handsome fellows, all of them, and so exactly alike that there was no telling one from the other.

Said the squire, 'To whom does the field of golden maize belong?'

And the seven peasants answered, 'It belongs to us.'

'And who are you?'

'We are the emperor's labourers.'

The squire rode back and told the emperor. And the emperor ordered the seven peasants to be brought before him.

Said the emperor, 'Who are you, and what are your names?'

And the eldest peasant answered, 'We, oh emperor, are your labourers, sons of one father and mother, and at our christenings each of us was given the same name—Simon. Our father taught us to till the earth from which all wealth springs; he also taught each one of us a trade, and such proficiency in that trade as no man else can equal.'

'Pooh!' said the emperor, who thought that he himself could excel in all things. 'What are these marvellous trades your father taught you?'

The first Simon said, 'My trade, oh emperor, is that of a swift builder. In less than no time I can build you a white pillar that will reach as high as the nearest stars.'

'That would be something worth looking at!' said the emperor. 'And you, second Simon, what is your trade?'

'Such a simple one, oh emperor, that it is scarce worth mentioning. I am a swift climber. When my brother has

built that pillar, I can run up it, and see what is happening all over the world.'

'And your trade, Simon the third?'

'I, my emperor, am a swift boat-builder. One, two, three —and my boat is made. But my boat, though small and plain, and not fit for the emperor's majesty, has this merit: what to other ships is a year's voyage, my boat makes in a day; and a ten years' voyage for other ships is but a week's voyage for mine.'

'And you, Simon the fourth?'

'Oh my emperor, my trade is a mere nothing. Should my brother build you a ship, I will sail it. And should an enemy pursue us, I have but to take the prow of the ship in my right hand, and it will sink to the bottom of the sea.'

'A fine performance—to drown all aboard!' said the emperor.

'Nay, not so,' said the fourth Simon. 'When the enemy has sailed away, I will put my left hand to the prow and draw the ship up again, none the worse for its ducking.'

'You astonish me!' said the emperor. 'And what can the fifth Simon do?'

'I, my liege, am but a smith. I can build you a smithy and make you a cross-bow whose bolt hits whatever the eye sees, whether far or near, whether in air or on land.'

'I should like to possess such a bow,' said the emperor. 'And your trade, Simon the sixth?'

'Sire, my trade is but a little thing. Whatever my brother's bolt hits, I can run and catch, whether on the highest mountain or in the thickest forest, or in the depths of the sea, whether by day or in the blackest night.'

'Well, well,' said the emperor, 'if all is as you say, you are a set of clever fellows! And you, Simon the seventh, lurking there behind your brothers and smiling to yourself, what trade has your father taught *you*?'

'My emperor, he taught me nothing, for nothing could I learn. My trade, such as it is, I was born with. Nor can it properly be called a trade, since I do not practise it. For in your kingdom the penalty for practising such a trade as mine is death. I am a master thief. No bolts, nor bars, nor doors of iron can stay me from possessing myself of aught I fancy. Were it but a gold pin, or the whole wealth of your majesty's treasury, all is mine should I desire it. Nor could bloodhounds track me down, nor any of your officers discover the secret place where I would hide what I had stolen.'

'You have courage, my friend, to tell me this to my face!' said the emperor. 'If I did but believe what you say, it would go hard with you!'

'You do not believe me then?'

'Nay, not I!'

'Then tell me, sire, where is your majesty's wallet?'

'Where it should be,' said the emperor, 'here at my belt.'

The emperor put his hand to his belt. What was this? The wallet was gone!'

And the seventh Simon laughed, and drew the wallet from his own sleeve.

The emperor's men raised a shout, and would have seized the seventh Simon and hurried him off to prison. But the

emperor said, 'Nay, let him be! I see I am not after all the cleverest man on earth, though I may be the handsomest. Come, my seven worthy Simons, follow me: I am eager for a display of your talents.'

So off went the seven Simons with the emperor till they came to a wide plain that bordered on the sea, and there the emperor halted. 'Now,' said he, 'let me see and prove your handiwork.'

So the first Simon produced stones out of nowhere, and built his great white pillar that raised its head up and up and up till it was lost in the dazzling sky. And the second Simon ran up the pillar and gazed over the earth; and when he came down again, he told the emperor of all that was happening in every part of the world, whether on sea or land. Then the third Simon stretched out his arms, once, twice, thrice. And there was his ship floating on the sea. And the fourth Simon stepped into the ship, seized the prow with his right hand, and vanished with the ship to the bottom of the sea. Not a trace of that ship to be seen: and then, lo—it was floating on the surface again, drawn up by the fourth Simon's left hand. And after that, the fifth Simon built his forge and hammered out his iron and fashioned his magic cross-bow. And the emperor said, 'Far, far away, I see a speck in the sky. I think it must be an eagle flying towards the sun. What think you—will your cross-bow bring it down?'

The fifth Simon smiled, raised the bow, took aim, let fly an arrow: the speck in the sky began rapidly to fall. And as it was falling, the sixth Simon took a dish and sped over the earth so swiftly that he seemed to fly. He was gone! He was back again! He had caught the eagle in his dish before it touched the ground, and here he was bringing it to the emperor. The emperor was so amused and delighted that he had forgotten all about his need to find a wife who was worthy of him. But now he remembered again: remembered, also, what the merchant had told him of the wonderful princess in the Island of Busan. And he said to the second

Simon, 'Up with you once more to the top of the pillar. Look over the seven times seven seas and give me news of the Island of Busan, and of its king and of its princess, whom I am told is beautiful enough and clever enough to be my wife.'

So the second Simon ran up the pillar, gazed, listened, and came sliding down again.

'Sire,' said he, 'I have seen the Island of Busan. I have seen the king, I have seen the princess. The king is full of pride. He sits on his throne and declares that no man on earth is handsome enough or clever enough for his lovely daughter; that he will give her to none, and that he will declare war on whomsoever dares to ask for her hand.'

'Then tell me, tell me,' asked the emperor, 'is the princess truly beautiful? Has the king a very large army? Is the island very far away?'

And the second Simon answered: 'The princess shines like the sun; and all the stars of heaven seem to sparkle in her eyes. The king's armed men are more in number than the sands of the sea. As to the island, it would take a vessel ten years in fair weather to sail there.'

The emperor stamped his foot and said, 'I am determined to marry that princess!' And he hurried into his palace and summoned his counsellors. Forgetting how clever he was, he irritably asked their advice. 'Have none of you blockheads any idea how I can win that princess?' said he.

But none of them had.

Then the third Simon stepped forward and said, 'Pardon a mere clodhopper for offering you advice, my liege. You wish to go to the Island of Busan? What can be easier? In my ship you can get there in a week. Only ask your counsellors to advise you what you shall do when you arrive. For it seems to me that if you are to fight, you cannot hope to win against so powerful an army.'

'Well, blockheads, and what *do* you advise?' said the emperor.

But the counsellors were silent. They had no advice to give. And the emperor stormed at them in his rage and disappointment.

But then the seventh Simon stepped forward and said, 'I, who am nothing in your august sight, may I have leave to speak?'

'Yes, yes, speak, speak, if you have anything sensible to say,' snapped the emperor.

'Then let me go in my brother's ship and steal the princess for you.'

'Can you do it?' cried the emperor.

'Why not?' said the seventh Simon. 'Nothing is easier. Let my brother's ship be laden with rich stuffs such as women love: with brocades and velvets, with shimmering silks and satins, and also with a goodly supply of costly jewels, bracelets, diadems, brooches and neck ornaments. Let my four middle brothers travel with me, and let the elder two stay with you as hostages.'

The emperor, greatly heartened, ordered everything to be done as the seventh Simon had suggested. And very soon the third Simon's ship was loaded, and he, with the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh Simons, went on board and set sail; whilst the first and second Simons remained with the emperor, who was so excited that he could talk of nothing but of the princess, and of whether the five Simons would succeed in bringing her away, and of what he would do to the two remaining Simons if she did not speedily arrive.

Meanwhile, the little ship was speeding over the seven times seven seas faster than any wind that blows, and in a week arrived at the Island of Busan. The coast of the island bristled with armed warriors, thick as pins in a pincushion; and a watchman from a high tower called out, 'Halt and anchor! Who are you? Whence come you? Why are you here?'

And the seventh Simon answered from the ship, 'We are subjects of the good and great emperor. We come in peace to trade our wares—rich stuffs, brocades and velvets, shimmering

silks, costly jewels, and exquisite apparel such as ladies love.'

The watchman went to report to the king.

The king said, 'Let them be off with them! Have we not all these things ourself that we must need traffic with strangers?'

But the princess was curious and coaxed the king.

'Dear Papa, let them land and show their wares! It will amuse me—and sometimes it is just a little dull for me here on this small island.'

'Well, well, if it will amuse you,' said the king, 'so be it.'

So the Simons brought some of their wares ashore and displayed them before the princess, who sat in a rose-red room, attended by her old nurse and her young maidens. Such beautiful wares had never been seen on the island; even the princess was dazzled by their magnificence, and the nurse and the maidens drew in their breath in joyous amazement.

And the seventh Simon said to the princess, 'Fairest of all fair ladies, these goods that we display are mere trifles. Will it please you to accept them for your maidens? The rarer and more precious goods we have left in the ship. And if you will honour our poor ship with a visit, we can show you such beautiful stuffs, such rare jewels, such shimmering garments as are worthy even of your own possessing.'

The princess ran to her father. 'Papa, Papa, the goods that the merchants have brought ashore are beautiful indeed, but they say that the goods they have aboard are finer still. Let me go to the ship, that I may see and choose out what I fancy.'

No, the king wouldn't let her go. But she coaxed so prettily, with 'Please, oh please, dear Papa,' and kissing him and laughing and pouting, that at last he said, 'Oh, very well!' And he ordered out his royal yacht, with a hundred bowmen, a hundred knights, and a thousand foot-soldiers to escort the princess to the merchants' ship.

But oh what a little ship it was! The princess laughed to see it. 'There is no room aboard for all my followers,' said she. 'My nurse and I alone will go aboard.'

So the seventh Simon put out a crystal plank, and the

princess stepped over it into the little ship, followed only by her nurse. And the seventh Simon led her down into the cabin and spread out his most precious wares, and indeed they were very beautiful; and the princess chose out this, chose out that, and couldn't decide what she would take and what leave.

And whilst she looked and pondered and laughed at her own indecision, the fourth Simon took the prow of the ship in his right hand, and sank the ship to the bottom of the sea. There it was now, racing along the sea bed on its way home: and on the royal yacht the hundred bowmen and the hundred knights and the thousand foot-soldiers were all struck dumb with terror.

What could they do? Nothing, but go back to the king and tell him that the foreign merchants' ship had sunk into the sea and the princess with it.

How the king stormed! How the king wept! 'Oh my daughter, my princess, my beautiful one, I am punished for my pride! Did I refuse all those who sought your hand only to lose you in the depths of the sea! And you, you miserable traitors, who watched this happen and stirred no finger to prevent it, away with you, out of my sight! A felon's death is too good for you, but you *shall* die, every mother's son of you, when I have devised the best means of making your deaths horrible!'

So the hundred bowmen, and the hundred knights and the thousand foot-soldiers were all marched off to prison.

And farther and farther away sped the third Simon's little ship on its way home under the water. So when this little ship was well out of sight of the island, the fourth Simon laid hold of the prow with his left hand, and the little ship rose to the surface again.

Then the princess looked up from the jewels she was choosing and said, 'Nurse, we have dallied long enough, I fear my father will be vexed.'

And she ran up on deck.

Oh heavens! What did she see? No harbour, no island: only the wide waves of ocean, and the little ship skimming over them faster than any wind blows.

But the princess didn't waste time lamenting. She was not clever for nothing. She immediately turned herself into a swan and flew off towards the Island of Busan. But the fifth Simon seized up his cross-bow and shot the swan through the wing; and as it came fluttering down, the sixth Simon caught it. The swan turned itself into a silver fish, slipped from his hand, and gave a leap towards the sea, but the sixth Simon caught it before it touched the water. Then the fish turned itself into a black mouse and darted along the deck towards a tiny hole; but the sixth Simon had it before it could reach the hole, and as he grasped it, lo—it was no mouse but the beautiful princess whom he grasped by her golden hair.

The princess turned to her nurse and said, 'I do not know who these men may be; but they are too clever for us.'

And the seventh Simon said, 'We are servants of that great emperor who claims to be the handsomest and cleverest man on earth; and we bring you to our master as a royal bride.

'Well then,' says the princess, 'I must make the best of it.'

But in her heart she rejoiced, did that lovely princess; for she was weary, poor girl, of being kept on an island like a priceless jewel in a locked casket that no one must touch.

So the little ship comes to the harbour of the emperor's capital, the crystal plank is put out, and the princess steps lightly over it, and comes ashore. The emperor, the first and second Simon, and a great retinue of lords and ladies are waiting to receive her. The emperor is ravished at the sight of her.

'She does indeed shine like the sun,' thinks he. 'And the stars of heaven sparkle in her eyes!'

He steps forward to greet her with an elegant speech:

'Princess of most rare beauty and rich wit, whose fame, resounding throughout all the world, smote my heart with

irrepressible longing: it is not in my poor heart to keep you here against your will. Say but the word, and the little ship shall take you home again. But if you will consent to stay here, you shall be empress of my kingdom and of my heart.'

And the princess answered, 'I will stay.'

What more need be told? The emperor's joy was unbounded. The Simons were sent back to the Island of Busan with a letter inviting the king to his daughter's wedding. The ship arrived just as the hundred bowmen, and the hundred knights, and the thousand foot-soldiers were being led out to execution. The king read the letter and pardoned all the prisoners; but he sulked and refused the invitation to the wedding.

Nevertheless, the wedding was a joyous affair. At the wedding feast the seven Simons were treated like princes; and when the feast was over the emperor drew them apart.

'My brave fellows,' said he, 'how can I ever thank you? Go to my treasury, fill your pockets, your hats, nay your very boots, with gold, with silver, with jewels. Take, if you will, all that my treasury contains! And as for yourselves, I will confer nobility upon you, and you shall be governors over seven cities.'

But the seven Simons remembered their field of golden maize, and the first Simon said, 'We are only your humble labourers, my emperor. We should cut but sorry figures as nobles and governors, nor do we desire gold, or silver, or jewels. All we ask is to be allowed to go back to our farm and till the earth as our father taught us, remembering that it is out of the earth that all wealth springs.'

So the seven Simons went back to their farm, and lived in peace and contentment. And the emperor was so happy with his beautiful bride, that whether he was the handsomest and cleverest man on earth, or whether he wasn't—well, it didn't seem to matter to him any more.

The Ram with the Golden Fleece

There was once a lad, and a good-looking lad, who hadn't a penny to bless himself with. He was hungry, he was all in rags; so off with him to a farmer to ask for work.

Says the farmer, 'What wages?'

Says the lad, 'Nay, I leave that to you. Food to put in my stomach, and a coat to put on my back, is what I'm chiefly needing.'

So the farmer fed him well, gave him a smock frock, and put him to tend the sheep.

That lad was a good lad, he didn't idle. He tended the sheep as if they were jewels; so at the end of a week the farmer gives him a flute.

And the lad played the flute all day long; none so happy, playing tunes and guarding the sheep.

Now among the sheep was a lamb with a golden fleece; and when the lad played his flute that lamb would get up and dance. The lad and the lamb became good friends, you are sure. So when at the end of a month the farmer again said, 'What wages?' The lad said, 'Nay, nothing now, but when my term of service is over, give me the lamb with the golden fleece.'

The farmer said, 'You shall have it.'

A year passed. The lamb with the golden fleece was a ram now, but still it danced to the tune of the lad's flute; and a fine sight it was, leaping and skipping, and its fleece glittering. So one day the lad said to the farmer, 'I left a poor old father at home. I've a mind to pay him a visit, that he may know all is well with me.'

The farmer said, 'Go, lad. Take the ram with you. And if you've a mind to come again, come and welcome.'

So off goes the lad, playing on his flute, with the golden-fleeced ram dancing after him.

It was a long way to the lad's home, not one day's journey, nor yet two. So when night fell and he scarce half-way home, he stopped at an inn and asked for lodging. What had he to pay with? Nothing. But he gave them a merry tune, and set the glittering golden lamb a-dancing in the kitchen, and that earned him a bed for himself and stabling for the ram.

And when the innkeeper's daughter saw the ram with its golden fleece glittering, and it dancing like any merry-andrew, she wanted it so badly that she thought to steal it. And out she goes at midnight to the stable and put her hand out to take it. What happened? Her hand stuck to the ram's fleece. Let her strain and struggle as she would, there was no pulling her hand away.

So there in the stable she has to stay. And so the lad finds her in the morning.

'Hey!' says he. 'Leave stroking of the ram, for it's time we were off on our way.'

'I can't leave stroking of it,' says she. 'I can't pull my hand away! I'm stuck fast!'

Well, he tries to pull her hand away, but he can't, either. So he comes out of the stable again, playing on his flute, and the ram comes dancing after him. And the girl comes dancing after the ram.

On they go, through the village and round the corner. And there is a woman putting bread into her oven. 'Well I never!' says she, and runs out waving the fire shovel.

'Get away home with you!' she shouts to the girl. 'You shameless hussy, what are you thinking of?'

But the lad went on playing, and the ram went on dancing, and the girl went on dancing with her hand stuck to the ram's fleece. So the woman gives the girl a whack with the fire shovel. What happened then? The fire shovel stuck to the girl's back, the woman stuck to the fire shovel, and away with them all down the road, dancing like crazy till they come to the church.

And there at the church door is the priest.

'What now? What now?' cries the priest. 'Is this the way to behave? Leave your nonsense and come to matins!'

But of course they couldn't leave their nonsense. So the priest gets angry and gives the woman a sting on the back with his cane. What happened? The cane stuck fast to the woman's back. The priest stuck fast to the cane: he couldn't get loose from it, do what he would. And away they all went, the lad playing, the golden-fleeced ram dancing, and the girl, the woman, and the priest flinging up their feet and hopping and skipping behind.

So on with them till night, and then they come to the king's city, and the lad takes lodging with an old woman just outside the gates. The ram he leaves in a field, and the other poor things he had to leave with it, since he couldn't pull them away.

Says the lad to the old woman, 'What news in this city?'

Says the old woman, 'Bad news, sure enough. The king's daughter is sick nigh to death, and no doctor can heal her. But there came a great physician who said could this poor princess be made to laugh she'd get well at once. So this very day the king has sent out his heralds to say that whoever can make his daughter laugh shall have her in marriage and be the king's heir. But, lack-a-day, it'll be many a weary while before that poor princess so much as smiles, I reckon; the sickness pains her that sorely.'

The lad says nothing, but he thinks to himself, 'May the night pass swiftly! I know a sight would make the dying laugh!'

So in the morning he goes to the king and says, 'I am come to make the princess laugh.'

'Do that, my lad, and the kingdom is yours!' says the king. 'But oh my poor little daughter, my poor little daughter!' says he, shedding tears over his beard.

The lad said, 'Bring her where she can look out into the courtyard, and I'll have her laughing!'

So they carried the princess in her bed to an open window, and the lad went to the field where his ram was.

The lad took out his flute and began to play. Up jumped the ram and began to dance, and those fast to it had to dance also. So the lad marches into the palace courtyard playing on his flute, with the ram and the rest of them skipping after him. And when the princess looked out and saw the ram dancing, and the girl with her hand stuck to the ram's fleece, the fire shovel stuck to the girl's back, the woman stuck to the fire shovel, the priest's cane stuck to the woman, and the priest stuck to the cane, and all of them hopping and skipping and twirling this way and that, just as the ram fancied in its dancing, and the faster and merrier the tune on the flute, the faster and madder they all dancing—well then the princess laughed, laughed, laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks with laughing. And she jumped off the bed and ran into the court to see the sight closer.

And when the ram with the golden fleece sees the princess coming, and she laughing fit to burst, that ram is so glad that it skips high into the air and shakes everything off its back—girl, shovel, woman, cane, priest and all. And that makes *them* so glad that they dance by themselves for joy; and the princess runs to the lad, takes him by the hand, and dances with the best of them.

So, after that, the lad married the princess; the priest was made court chaplain, the woman court bakeress, and the girl lady-in-waiting to the princess. The lad fetched his old father to court and made a proper gentleman of him. He set the farmer up in style, too, with rich acres all rent free. There never was a lad more good and grateful. And the ram with the golden fleece followed the lad wherever he went, whether indoors or out, upstairs or down.

So that's the end of the story.

The Nine Peahens and the Golden Apples

There was a golden apple-tree and it grew in the king's garden. Every night the apple-tree blossomed and bore golden fruit. But every morning the fruit was gone.

The king said, 'Who will keep watch and catch the thief who steals my golden apples?'

The king's eldest son said, 'I will keep watch.'

So that night he went and hid himself near the apple-tree. The wind whispered, the boughs swayed, the apples began to ripen. But—what would you?—the prince fell asleep. And in the morning the apples were gone.

Then the king's next oldest son said, 'Tonight I will watch.' He hid himself near the apple-tree. The wind whispered, the boughs swayed, the apples began to ripen. What would you? The prince fell asleep. When he woke in the morning, the apples were gone.

The king's youngest son said, 'I, too, will watch. But I will not hide myself. I will take a bed and lie me down boldly under the apple-tree.'

And that he did. The wind whispered, the boughs swayed, the apples began to ripen. And the prince fell asleep. But at midnight he woke, for a great light was shining on his eyelids. He looked up: the golden apples were ripe, and their shining lit the garden. And there came a rushing of wings over the tree, and down flew nine golden peahens. Eight of them perched in the tree, and began to pluck the apples. But the ninth fluttered to the ground and turned into a maiden beautiful as the dawn.

The maiden stooped to the prince, took his hand and smiled.

Said he, 'You are very beautiful, my princess!'

Said she, 'You are very handsome, my prince!'

So they talked together, and when the eight peahens had plucked all the fruit, the maiden said, 'It is time we were gone.'

And the prince said, 'Will you not leave me at least a little of the fruit to take to my father?'

So the maiden gave him two golden apples. Then she changed herself into a peahen and flew away with her sisters.

And the prince took the two apples to his father.

'Well done, my son!'

The next night the prince went to his bed under the apple-tree again. All happened as before: he slept and the apples ripened. He woke, and the apples were ripe: the nine golden peahens flew down, eight plucked the fruit, the ninth turned into a maiden; she and the prince talked together; she gave him two apples, changed back into a peahen and flew away with her sisters. And the prince took the two golden apples to his father.

'Well done, my son!'

So it went on for many nights. The prince fell deeply in love with the maiden, and she fell deeply in love with him. And they plighted their troth.

But the prince told no one about the maiden.

So then his brothers grew jealous. 'We fail, he succeeds! And whence comes his success? He will tell us nothing!' And they went to consult a witch.

That night the witch took a knife and hid herself behind the apple-tree. The prince came, lay on his bed, fell asleep. The apples ripened, the light shone, the peahens flew down, the ninth turned into a maiden and ran to greet the prince. But the witch leaned from behind the tree and cut off a lock of the maiden's hair. In an instant the maiden turned once more into a golden peahen and flew away, and her eight sisters flew after her.

The prince rushes at the witch to kill her. But she changes herself into a mist. And the mist laughs, 'ha! ha!' and drifts away laughing out of the garden.

Night after night the prince went back to the tree. But the

peahens never came, nor did the apples ripen. The prince wept. He told his father all.

'Father, give me leave to go and seek my bride,' he said.

The king said, 'Why seek that which has vanished? Are there not beautiful maidens in my kingdom? Choose which you will.'

The prince said, 'I have already made my choice. I must go where my heart is.'

So the king said, 'Go, if you must.'

And the prince took a horse and one servant, and set out, he knew not whither.

Now in the course of his journeying he came to a lake. And near the lake stood a magnificent castle. It was the witch who had built that castle, and in it she lived like a queen: and the prince did not know her. She entertained him royally, and asked him whither he journeyed, and what was his quest.

The prince said, 'Whither I journey, I know not; but I seek nine golden peahens.'

And the witch-queen said, 'Oh my son, I know those golden peahens. Every noon they come to swim in this lake. Go to your bed now and sleep without a care. Tomorrow noon you shall see them.'

The prince rejoiced, went to his bed, and slept.

Then the witch went to the prince's servant; she was carrying a sack full of gold.

Said she, 'All this gold I will give you, if you will do what I ask.'

The servant said, 'What must I do?'

The witch-queen gave him a little pair of bellows. 'Hide this under your coat. When you go tomorrow to the lake, blow secretly on the back of your master's neck.'

'I will do that,' said the servant.

Next morning the prince and his servant rode down to the lake. The hour of noon had not yet come. Softly, softly, the prince rode up and down by the margin of the lake, waiting for her whom he loved. His servant followed behind him,

and as the prince gazed up into the sky, watching for her whom he loved, the servant took the bellows from under his coat, and softly, softly, blew on the back of the prince's neck. The prince's head drooped forward. He laid his head on his horse's mane, and slept like a dead man.

A whirr of wings. There were the nine peahens. Eight of them went to swim in the lake; the ninth lighted on the horse's head. 'Awake, my prince! Arise my beloved!' cried the poor peahen.

But the prince did not wake, though she called and called. And by and by her sisters came up from the lake, and they all flew away.

The prince wakes up. 'What has happened? Have they been here?'

'They have been,' said the servant. 'Eight bathed in the lake. The ninth caressed and called you. But you would not waken. And by and by they all flew away.'

The prince felt ready to kill himself for grief. But the faithless servant rejoiced over his bag of gold.

And the witch-queen said to the servant, 'There is another bag of gold waiting for you, if you will do the like tomorrow.'

Would he not! He did. On the morrow, as the prince waited by the lake, the servant came behind him, took the bellows from under his coat, and blew on the prince's neck. As yesterday, so today: the prince falls asleep, the golden peahens come, eight swim in the lake, the ninth calls the prince. She calls and weeps, calls and weeps; he does not waken. So she flies away with her sisters. But before she went, she said to the servant, 'Tell your master that I shall come tomorrow for the last time.'

The prince woke, the servant told him. The prince said, 'If I sleep tomorrow, may I never wake again! When I go to the lake I will set my horse at the gallop, and I will not draw rein till I see my beloved.'

So, on the third morning, true to his word, the prince galloped his horse up and down by the lake till the poor

beast sweated. But the servant galloped behind him, took the bellows from under his coat, and blew on the prince's neck. The prince's head sunk down on his horse's mane; he slept like the dead; the horse stood still; and the faithless servant rejoiced at the thought of the third bag of gold the witch-queen had promised him.

Then came the peahens. 'Awake my darling! Arise my beloved! Oh speak to me, my soul's delight! Up, up, my bird! Awake my lambkin! Rise up, my little dove!'

But the prince sleeps on. She cannot wake him. What can she do but fly away? But before she went, she said to the servant, 'When thy master wakens, tell him to cut off the head of the nail. Only then will he find me again.'

The nine golden peahens had but just flown out of sight when the prince woke. 'What has happened? Have they been here?'

'They have been and gone. They will not come again,' said the wicked servant. 'Before she went, the one who tried to waken you bade me tell you that if you would find her again you must first cut off the head of the nail. That is a riddle; and the answer is that you will never find her. You have lost all; but I have found three bags of gold.'

'Then it is *you* who have betrayed me and caused me to sleep!' cried the prince. 'And it is I who now know the answer to the riddle!'

And he drew his sword and struck off the faithless servant's head.

Then he spurred his horse and galloped away and away and away, till he was out of sight of the witch-queen's castle. On he rides till evening, and then he comes to a hermit's cell. The hermit takes him in, gives him supper and a bed. In the morning, the prince said, 'Holy father, have you ever heard of nine golden peahens?'

The hermit said, 'My little son, you are in luck! From here to where those golden peahens dwell is not more than six hours ride. Go straight forward and you will come to a

large gateway. Having passed through the gateway, turn to the right and you will come to a city. In that city is a golden palace, and it is there that the peahens dwell. For those nine peahens are nine princesses. Go with my blessing, little son, and good fortune go with you!'

Who was glad now but our prince? He flung himself on his knees, kissed the hermit's hand, and thanked him with tears of joy. Then he rode away, came to the gateway, passed through it, turned to the right, came to the city, came to the golden palace, leaped from his horse, ran into the palace court, and only stopped in his haste when a watchman challenged him, demanding who he was.

The prince tells him; the watchman goes to tell the ninth princess; the princess runs out.

'Oh my prince, my prince!'

'Oh my princess, my princess!'

'Oh my love!' 'Oh my love!' And 'Oh, my love!'

They are in each other's arms now; they are soon married; and the princess hands over all the keys of the castle to her husband.

'You are now master here,' says she. 'Lock and unlock what you will. But there is one little room I would not have you enter.'

The prince said, 'If I am master of the palace, you are mistress of my heart; I obey you in all things.'

Alack the day! What was in that little room? The prince thought about it; and the more he thought about it, the more curious he became. 'What can there be in there that she would not have me see?' And in the end, when one day the princess was out walking in the garden, what must the silly fellow do but unlock the door of that little room and walk in!

Well, the room was empty, except for a huge cask which stood on the floorboards. The cask was bound round with three iron hoops; and out of the cask came a voice, moaning and groaning:

'I thirst! I thirst! Give me water!'

The prince fetched a cup of water and poured it through the bung-hole.

And one of the iron hoops burst with a bang.

But the voice went on moaning, 'Water! Water! More water, or I die!'

So the prince fetched another cup of water and poured it through the bung-hole.

And *bang* went another hoop.

But 'Water, water, *water*!' moaned the voice. 'My throat is parched! My body burns! Yet a third cup!'

The prince fetched a third cup of water and poured it through the bung-hole.

Bang! The third hoop burst and fell off. The cask tumbled to pieces. Out of the wreckage struggled a dragon. And the dragon flapped his wings, rushed through the door, flew into the garden, picked up the princess: and up, up into the air with her, and far, far away.

The prince ran, fetched his horse from the stable, and set off in pursuit. But whither? Whither? The dragon was a mere spot in the sky now, and soon that mere spot was gone. On and on rode the prince—over the whole world if need be—till he came to a river, and there he lighted down to rest his tired horse.

Something is gasping and crying, there on the river-bank. What is it? A little fish. 'Prythee, brother, throw me back into the water! You will need me some day. Take one of my scales. When you are in trouble, rub it between your fingers, and I will come to your aid.'

The prince took one of the fish's scales, threw the fish into the river, and having rested, rode on his way.

And he comes to a wood, and there is a fox caught in an iron trap.

'Prythee, brother, let me out of this trap! You will need me some day! Take some of my hairs, and when you are in trouble, rub them between your fingers, and I will come to your aid.'

The prince let the fox out of the trap, took some of the fox's hairs, and rode on his way. And soon he comes to another iron trap, and there is a crow in it, caught by the leg.

'Prythee, brother, let me out of this trap. You will need me some day! Take one of my feathers, and when you are in trouble rub it between your fingers, and I will come to your aid.'

The prince did that; he let the crow out of the trap, and took one of its feathers. Then he asked, 'You who fly about the world, have you seen a dragon with a princess in his claws?'

'Why yes,' says the crow. 'The dragon has carried the princess to his castle, and his castle is on the top of a mountain. The mountain is beyond this forest; ride straight on and you will come to it.'

The prince spurred on through the forest and came to the mountain. He set his horse at the mountain and they were soon at the top of it. There is the castle! The prince goes in. The dragon is not at home: but on a stool by the dragon's throne, the princess sits weeping.

'My princess!'

'Oh—my prince!'

She is laughing now! And now they will escape together. They run out, leap on the prince's horse, and away with them.

The dragon comes home. No princess! He goes to the stable, and there stands the dragon's horse, who can go swifter than flying.

'Tell me, my horse,' says the dragon. 'What shall we do? Shall we first eat and drink, or must we set out in pursuit on empty stomachs?'

The horse says, 'We won't hurry ourselves. We'll eat and drink, and then set out. We shall catch them!'

So the dragon fed his horse and sat down to his own dinner. And after that—hie and away after the prince and princess.

On his horse that went faster than flying, the dragon caught up with the prince and princess in no time. He snatched the princess and said to the prince, 'This time I forgive you, because you gave me to drink. But beware how you cross my path again! You will not be forgiven twice!'

Off whirled the dragon, horse, and princess. Where was the prince to go now, what to do? Must he forsake his lovely wife! No, he would not! He turned and rode back to the dragon's castle. The dragon has gone out again; the princess sits on a stool by the dragon's throne, all in tears.

What can they do? The prince has an idea. 'We must find a horse as swift as the dragon's horse. When the dragon comes home, ask him where he got his horse. I will get one like it, or I will die!'

The prince goes to hide behind the stable. The dragon comes home. Does the princess pet and coax him with her pretty ways? Does she not!

'Dearest dragon,' says she, 'yours is the swiftest horse in all the world. Where did you get it?'

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'Ah ha!' says the dragon. 'I bought it where no one else can buy. I bought it from an old hag that lives in the forest. She has twelve fine horses, so alike that you can't tell one from the other. Ah, those horses can gallop swiftly, but not so swiftly as mine. But in a corner of her stable she keeps a sorry nag, thin as a rake. That nag is own brother to my horse: it can go faster than any wind, it can soar heavenward. But no one can get it. For whoso would have it must first serve the old hag, and in her service he will lose his head. . . . Sing me to sleep now, princess, for I am weary.'

The princess sang the dragon to sleep. And when he was snoring she ran out to the prince and told him what the dragon had said. 'But let us get on your horse and flee away now,' said she. 'You must not go to that hag and lose your head!'

The prince said, 'I shall lose it if I don't go! For if we flee on my horse, the dragon will catch us.'

And he bids the princess good-bye, and off with him to the forest and the old hag's house.

'Good day, granny!'

'Good day, little fellow! What brings you here?'

'I would take service with you, granny.'

'Very well, little fellow. My service is easy. I have a white mare and a foal. All you have to do is to guard them well for three days. Then for your wages I will give you any horse of mine you may fancy. But if you lose my mare and foal, I will have your head. You see that post there beside the door—listen and hear what it is saying.'

The prince listened, and the post said, 'I lack a head, granny! Give me a head!'

'Patience!' said the old hag. 'You shall have a head presently.'

And she screamed with laughter.

The old hag took the prince to the stables. There were the twelve fine horses, all alike. There in a corner was the sorry nag; and there, too, was the white mare with her foal. And it was evening.

'Now,' says the old hag to the prince, 'off with you! Ride the mare to pasture. She knows the way. But in the morning, see you bring her safely back to me.'

The prince led the mare out of the stable and leaped on her back. Hie and away! The mare went off like the wind itself, with the foal galloping behind her. Over hill, over dale, till midnight without a stop. And then—who would believe it?—a drowsiness came over the prince and he fell asleep. When he woke up, the sun was rising; and, lo and behold, the bridle reins were in his hand, but he was sitting astride a log of wood.

He ran here, he ran there. He searched and searched. Not a glimpse of that mare! He came to a river, and flung himself down in his misery. Then he bethought him of the little fish, who had said, 'You will need me some day!' And he took the fish scale out of his pocket and rubbed it between his fingers.

The little fish put its head up out of the water.

'Are you in trouble, chosen brother of mine?'

Said the prince, 'I am in trouble enough! The old hag's mare has escaped me. I don't know where to find her!'

The little fish said, 'Ah, but *I* know! She has turned herself into a trout, and the foal into a minnow. But do you just flick the water with the bridle, and say, "Shoo! Shoo! old granny's mare!" And you will get her again.'

The prince did that, and at once the mare and her foal came out of the water. The prince bridled the mare and rode her back to the old hag's house, and the foal trotted behind.

The old hag said not a word. She set food before the prince and led the mare to the stable. Then she took a whip and beat the mare, screaming out, 'Didn't I tell you to go down among the fishes?'

The mare said, 'I did go down among the fishes. But they are his friends, and they betrayed me.'

So the old hag fed the mare and said, 'Tomorrow you shall go among the foxes.'

In the evening, she again bade the prince ride the mare to pasture. And as he led the mare out of the stable, the post beside the door was shouting, 'I lack a head, granny! Give me a head! Granny, I lack a head!'

'Patience, my post,' said the old hag. 'You shall have one tomorrow.'

And she screeched with laughter.

Hie and away! All happened as it had happened the night before. Over hill, over dale, till midnight, the mare galloping and the foal full tilt after her. But at midnight the prince fell asleep; and at sunrise he woke astride a log of wood, with the bridle reins fast in his hand.

Ah me! What to do? Must he now lose his head? No! He had heard what the old hag said to the mare in the stable, for she had screeched loud enough for the world to hear. So he took the fox's hairs out of his wallet, and rubbed them between his fingers.

There was the fox. 'What can I do for you, heart's brother?'

'I have lost the old hag's mare, heaven help me!'

Said the fox, 'She is staying with us. She has turned herself into a vixen, and the foal into a cub. But do you strike the earth with the bridle, and say, "Shoo! Shoo! old granny's mare".'

The prince struck the ground and called out, and in a bound the mare and foal stood before him. So up on the mare with him, and back at a gallop to the old hag's house, with the foal full tilt after them.

When she saw the mare, the old hag scowled. But she said not a word to the prince. She set food before him, and led the mare to the stable. Then she beat the mare and screamed, 'Didn't I tell you to go among the foxes?'

'So I did, granny. But the foxes are his friends. They betrayed me.'

'Then tomorrow you shall go among the crows,' screamed the old hag. 'And if the prince brings you home, I will skin you alive!'

Said the mare, 'I will go among the crows, granny.'

And so that evening, the same thing: the prince leads the mare out of the stable, the post cries out for a head, the old hag promises the post a head in the morning, the prince mounts the mare. Hie and away! over hill, over dale, till midnight. At midnight he falls asleep, at sunrise he wakes astride a log of wood, with the bridle reins fast in his hand.

Ah me! Ah me! But what had he heard the old hag say? 'Tomorrow you shall go among the crows.' The prince takes the crow's feather out of his wallet, rubs it between his fingers: down flies the crow.

'How can I help you, brother mine?'

'I have lost the old hag's mare.'

The crow said, 'She is with us. She has turned herself into a crow and the foal into a nestling. Do but wave the bridle in the air and call out, "Shoo! Shoo! old granny's mare!" and you will soon get her.'

The prince waves the bridle in the air. 'Shoo! Shoo! old

granny's mare!' The mare and the foal stand beside him. He gallops the mare home, and the foal gallops after.

The old hag sets dinner before the prince. She runs screaming to beat the mare. But the mare turns into a crow and flies away, with a young crow flying after her.

And the prince said, 'Granny, I have served you faithfully. Now give me what you promised.'

The old hag growled and muttered and went with the prince to the stable. 'There are my twelve fine horses—choose which you will.'

'Nay, granny, the sorry jade in the corner is good enough for me.'

'Then take it!' screamed the old hag. 'And much good may it do you!'

The prince led the sorry jade out of the stable. The old hag followed. The post beside the door called out, 'I want his head, granny! You promised me his head!' But the old hag gave the post a kick and toppled it over. And the prince rode away laughing.

When they were out of sight of the old hag's house, the sorry jade said, 'My prince, put your hand in my right ear, and take out what you find there.'

The prince put his hand in the sorry jade's right ear, and took out a brush.

And the sorry jade said, 'My prince, now put your hand in my left ear: take out what you find there.'

The prince did that, and took out a curry-comb.

'Now comb me gently, and brush me down smoothly,' said the sorry jade.

So the prince combed and brushed the sorry jade. And lo! there was a horse! Great and strong, and shining like gold!

'Mount, mount!' cried the horse. 'We have no time to spare!'

The prince mounted, the horse set off, faster than any roaring wind that blows. In two minutes they were back at the dragon's palace.

The dragon was not at home. The prince ran in and found the princess. 'Hasten, hasten! I have the horse! Now we must flee away!'

They hurry out, they get on the horse—away, faster than any roaring wind. The dragon comes in, and finds the princess gone. 'Ah, that rogue prince! This time I will devour him! Tell me,' says the dragon to his horse, 'shall we set off now in pursuit, or shall we eat and drink first?'

Said the horse, 'Eat or not eat, drink or not drink, pursue or not pursue, you will never catch them.'

'Will I not?' howled the dragon. And up and after them.

The prince and princess hear the pounding of horse's hoofs behind them. 'Faster! Faster! Faster!' they cry to the horse that bears them.

And the horse answers, 'There is no need for more haste.'

He galloped, galloped. The dragon's horse galloped, galloped. He is close behind the prince and princess now. But his breath comes in gasps. 'Wait, wait, my brother,' he cries, 'or I shall burst my lungs!'

And the other turns his head, and answers, 'And who's to blame for that, you dolt, if you carry that monster on your back? Kick up your heels, throw him to the ground, and follow me!'

When the dragon's horse hears this, he tosses his head, arches his back, flings out with his hind legs. *Flop!* Off rolls the dragon against a rock and is smashed to pieces.

The prince's horse stands still. His brother trots up to him, the princess gets on his back, and merrily, merrily they go on their way to the princess's kingdom.

And there they lived, and there they reigned, and were happy ever after.

Little Firenko

There was a little lad called Firenko, and he lived by a big lake. So one day Firenko's father made him a little boat.

Said Firenko, 'Now I am going fishing!'

Said his mother, 'You won't catch anything. You are too young.'

But Firenko said, 'I shall catch a lot of fish.'

So his mother dresses him up in a white shirt and a red girdle, and Firenko goes down to the waterside, gets into his little boat, pushes off, and sings out:

Boat, boat, float a little farther!
Boat, boat, float a little farther!
Carry me into the deep water,
That I may catch a lot of fish.

The boat floated out into the deep water. And Firenko caught a lot of fish.

Then he heard his mother calling:

Firenko, Firenko, my little boy Firenko!
Float, now float up to the waterside,
I am bringing you food and drink.

And Firenko sang out:

Boat, my boat, float up to the waterside,
That is my mother calling me.

The boat floats to the shore. Firenko gives his mother the fish he has caught, and eats the food she's brought him. Well, well, his white shirt and his red girdle are dripping wet! So his mother runs to fetch him a red shirt and a white girdle.

And when she has dressed him up in these, he gets back into his little boat, and sings out:

Boat, my boat, float a little farther,
Boat, my boat, float a little farther,
Carry me again into deep water,
That I may catch a lot of fish.

The boat floated off into the deep water; and Firenko caught a lot more fish.

In the evening, Firenko's father came down to the edge of the water, and called out:

Firenko, Firenko, my little lad Firenko,
Float, now float up to the waterside,
I am bringing you food and drink.

And Firenko sang out:

Boat, boat, float up to the waterside,
That is my father calling me.

Now then, hidden among the bulrushes is an old witch, and she has been watching Firenko the whole day long. Thinks the old witch to herself, 'I'll have that boy!'

But Firenko has moored his little boat by the waterside, and off home with his father. So the witch goes home too.

Said Firenko next morning, 'Now I am going fishing again.'

Said his mother, 'So! It seems you are not too young to catch fish, after all!'

She dresses him up in a yellow shirt with a green girdle; and away goes Firenko to the waterside, gets into his little boat, pushes off, and sings out:

Boat, my boat, float a little farther!
Boat, my boat, float a little farther!

Carry me out into deep water!
That I may catch a lot of fish!

The boat floated off into the deep water: and as yesterday, so today, Firenko caught a lot of fish.

And as yesterday, so today, the old witch is hiding in the bulrushes. So by and by she calls out:

Firenko, Firenko, my little boy Firenko,
Float, now float up to the waterside,
I am bringing you food and drink.

But Firenko sings out:

Boat, my boat, do not float up to the waterside,
Boat, my boat, stay in the deep water,
Boat, my boat, that is not my mother,
That is an old witch calling me.

So the boat stays in the deep water, and Firenko goes on fishing.

The witch creeps out of the bulrushes. Thinks she, 'I must call in just such a voice as Firenko's mother has.' And off she goes to the smith and says:

Smith, smith, make me a little voice,
A little, thin voice like Firenko's mother's voice,
If you do not, I will gobble you up!

So the smith forged a little, thin voice, just like Firenko's mother's voice. And the witch put it in her mouth, and off with her again to hide in the bulrushes.

And Firenko is still fishing.

So the witch calls out in the little, thin voice that is just like Firenko's mother's voice:

Firenko, Firenko, my little boy Firenko,
Float, now float up to the waterside,
I am bringing you food and drink.

And Firenko sings out:

Boat, my boat, float up to the waterside,
I hear my mother's voice calling me.

The boat floats to the shore. The witch jumps out from the bulrushes, she snatches up Firenko, and carries him to her house.

In the house, the witch's daughter, Alanka, was sprawled over the kitchen table, fast asleep.

The witch shook Alanka and shouted:

Alanka, Alanka, wake up, you stupid girl,
Heat the stove, boil the pot,
Throw in herbs, cut up Firenko,
Boil him, boil him, boil him, BOIL HIM,
Whilst I go and call my sisters to the feast.

Alanka gets up yawning and says:

Botheration, botheration!
Why must I do unnecessary things?

'You'll do as you're told!' shouts the witch. And off she goes to call her sister witches to the feast.

Alanka was wandering about the kitchen, rubbing her eyes. She was a fool, if ever there was one. She blew up the fire under the pot; and when the water boiled she picked up a big knife. Said she:

Firenko, Firenko, my little boy Firenko,
I don't know the way to cut people up.

And Firenko answered:

Give me the knife, I will cut myself up.
Give me the knife, go, gather the herbs,
When you come back, I shall be in the pot.

So Alanka went off to gather the herbs. And Firenko took down some joints of pork that the witch had hung up under the ceiling for her Christmas dinner. He cuts up the pork and puts it in the pot. He takes off his yellow shirt and his green girdle, and hangs them on a chair back. He cuts off some of his golden curls and strews them on the hearth.

Then he runs out.

In front of the witch's house was a grassy courtyard. Two oaks were growing there, side by side. Firenko climbs up into one of the oak-trees, and hides among the branches.

Alanka came back with the herbs. She saw the joints of pork boiling in the pot, and said:

What a good little boy, he has cut himself up!
He has jumped in the pot, he is boiling nicely,
All that I *have to do, is to drop in the herbs.*

So she drops the herbs into the pot, yawns, sprawls over the kitchen table, and goes to sleep again.

Back comes the old witch with her sister witches. There they all are, stamping into the kitchen. The witch looks in the pot, snuffs the herbs and the boiling meat, shakes Alanka, and shouts:

Wake up, wake up, you stupid Alanka,
It is time now to begin the feast!

The old witch took the pot off the fire and set it down on the floor. All the witches gathered round. They dipped in their ladles, and gobbled and gobbled and gobbled, till there wasn't a mouthful left.

The old witch took Firenko's little yellow shirt and green girdle, and tossed them into the fire. She swept up the hair he had cut from his head, tossed that into the fire also, and shrieked out:

Burn little shirt, burn little girdle,
Frizzle and burn little golden curls,

Burn, burn, frizzle and burn
All that is left of little Firenko.

She danced a jig. She was merry as merry. So were all her sister witches. They had eaten themselves quite silly. They went out and rolled on the grass in the courtyard, shouting:

We turn about, we roll about,
Having eaten little Firenko!

And Firenko sang out from the oak-tree where he was hidden:

You turn about, you roll about,
Having eaten your Christmas pork.

Said the old witch, 'Did I hear something?'

Said the sister witches, 'Only the noise of the branches tossed by the wind.'

Then they all began to roll about on the grass again, and shout:

We turn about, we roll about,
Having eaten little Firenko!

And Firenko sang out from the oak-tree:

Turn about, roll about,
Turn about, roll about,
You have eaten your Christmas pork.

The old witch jumps up. 'I *did* hear something! I heard someone calling out of the oak-tree!'

And she runs to the oak-tree, and sees Firenko's little bare arms clinging to one of the branches.

'I'll kill that girl, that stupid Alanka!' she shrieks. 'Alanka, Alanka, come and be killed!'

But Alanka wasn't quite so stupid as all that. She ran away and never came back.

So the old witch ran at the tree where Firenko was hiding and began to gnaw at the trunk. She gnawed, gnawed, gnawed: she smashed two of her front teeth. And then off with her to the smith:

Smith, smith, make me two iron teeth,
To gnaw down the oak where Firenko is hidden,
If you do not, I will eat you!

So the smith forged two iron teeth. The witch put them in her mouth and rushed back to the tree. She gnawed, gnawed, gnawed at the trunk. She gnaws it nearly through: the oak-tree shakes and sways: Firenko gives a spring and swings himself into the branches of the second oak. The first oak crashes to the ground. The old witch rushes at the second oak; she gnaws at the trunk. She gnaws, gnaws, gnaws. She has nearly gnawed it through, when *crack!* she breaks two bottom teeth. So off with her to the smith again:

Smith, smith, make me two more iron teeth,
To gnaw down the oak where Firenko is hidden,
If you do not, I will gobble you up!

The smith forged her two more iron teeth. The old witch puts them in her mouth. She rushes back to the courtyard. She sets her teeth in the trunk of the second oak: she gnaws, gnaws, gnaws. The tree shakes and sways. Says Firenko to himself, 'Oh, what shall I do?'

He looked up; he saw a flock of swans and geese flying over the tree, and he sang out:

Oh my swans and geese,
Take me on your pinions,
Bear me to my father and my mother!

But the swans and geese answered, 'We are in a hurry. Let those who come behind carry you.'

And they flew on.

The witch is gnawing, gnawing. The oak-tree is swaying, swaying. Firenko looks up, sees a second flock of swans and geese flying over the tree, and sings out:

Oh my swans and geese,
Take me on your pinions,
Bear me to my father and my mother,
To the cottage of my father and my mother,
Where I may eat and drink in comfort!

But the swans and geese answered, 'We are in a hurry. Let those in the rear carry you.'

And they flew on.

The witch is gnawing, gnawing. The oak-tree is swaying, swaying. Firenko looks up; he sees a third flock of swans and geese flying over the tree, and he sings out:

Oh my swans and geese,
Take me on your pinions,
Bear me to my father and my mother,
To the cottage of my father and my mother,
Where I may eat and drink in comfort!
Have pity now on little lost Firenko,
For the oak-tree is falling, is falling, is falling!

The flock swoops down. Firenko scrambles on to the back of the largest swan. The oak-tree falls with a crash. But the flock rises and flies on, bearing Firenko with them.

They carried Firenko to his parents' cottage, and set him on the roof. Firenko peered down through the chimney and saw his mother making little pancakes. She was weeping into the batter; and Firenko's father sat beside her, staring at the fire.

Said the mother, 'Where is my Firenko? Oh, if I could see him, if but in a dream!'

Said the father, 'I dream and I dream. I keep on dreaming. I dream of swans and geese bringing our Firenko on their wings.'

The mother fried the little pancakes, and began helping them out. 'Three for you, father, and three for me.'

And Firenko calls from the roof, 'None for me?'

The mother was startled and said, 'Surely that was my Firenko's voice?'

But the father said, 'No, no, mother; it was but the wind in the chimney. You think of Firenko till you hear his voice in every sound.'

So the mother goes on sharing out the little pancakes.

'Three more for you, father; three more for me.'

And Firenko calls from the roof, 'None for Firenko?'

The mother drops the pan. 'It *was* my Firenko's voice I heard! Go up and see, old man!'

The father gets a ladder and climbs up onto the roof. What does he see? He sees Firenko laughing at him.

'Oh my little boy, my little boy! Come down my little boy, and you shall have some pancakes!'

So Firenko climbed down from the roof and ran into the kitchen.

And then there were three happy people, eating their fill of pancakes.

The Secret-Keeping Boy

Once upon a time there was a widow who had a little son, called Janos. And one day, as Janos was playing in the fields, there came an old man to him, carrying a little scabbard.

Says the old man, 'Janos, would you like this little scabbard?'

Says Janos, 'Yes, I would!'

So the old man gave Janos the scabbard and went on his way.

Janos fastened the little scabbard to his belt, and walked about, proud as proud. 'Now I am a soldier!' says he.

And he wore that little scabbard every day.

Well, he soon found it was no ordinary thing, this scabbard; for as Janos grew, so the scabbard grew. It was always just the right size for him. But one day he thought, 'What good is a scabbard without a sword?' And off with him into the garden to throw that scabbard away.

But he didn't throw it away; because what should he see, sticking out of a strawberry bed, but a little sword. He pulled the little sword out of the earth and thrust it into the scabbard. Bah! the sword is much too small, the scabbard seems to swallow it. So Janos stuck that little sword back into the earth.

Every day Janos went to look at the little sword. Every day it had grown a bit, and every day he thrust it into the scabbard to see if it would fit. But the sword was still too small; so every day he put it back in the earth.

'Grow, grow, my sword!' says he. 'Grow that I may wear you and become a hero!'

So one night Janos had a wonderful dream; and when he woke in the morning he was laughing.

Says his mother, 'What are you laughing at, Janos?'

Says Janos, 'At my wonderful dream.'

'Tell me your dream, Janos!'

'No, no, I won't tell it till it comes true.'

But his mother wants to know, and she pesters him. She pesters for days. But no, he won't tell her! So at last she gets angry and beats him, and Janos runs out into the garden, crying.

'My little sword, my little sword, comfort me!' he sobs.

And the sword began to work itself round and round in the earth, as if it were trying to jump out.

So Janos pulled out the sword, and tried it in the scabbard. Ho, ho! What's this? Sword fits scabbard, scabbard fits sword. Yes, yes, they are made for one another!

'Now I *am* a hero!' says Janos.

Then he began to cry all over again, because he didn't want to go back into the house and have his mother pester him to tell his dream, and beat him because he wouldn't tell it. So, though the sword is in the scabbard, and the scabbard is at his belt, he sits and he sobs.

And on the road outside the garden a noble lord came driving by. The noble lord looked over the garden fence and saw Janos crying his heart out. So he stops the carriage and says to the coachman, 'Go and see what's the matter with that pretty little lad.'

The coachman went, and soon came back. 'My lord, the little lad is crying because his mother has beaten him.'

Says the lord, 'Bring him to me.'

So the coachman fetched Janos, and when the noble lord saw him—one look was enough. 'Why, my little lad, my pretty little lad, will you come with me and be my son?'

'Yes, if my mother will let me.'

'Go, fetch her.'

The widow came out; she was still angry. Yes, yes, the noble lord could have Janos; she was glad to get rid of such a disobedient boy! So Janos got into the carriage, and sat him down beside the lord.

Now here is Janos, sword, scabbard and all, driving away with the noble lord.

Says the lord, 'Why were you crying so bitterly just now?'

Says Janos, 'Because my mother beat me.'

Says the noble lord, 'Why did she beat you?'

Says Janos, 'Because I wouldn't tell her my dream.'

'And why wouldn't you tell her?'

'Because I will tell no one.'

'Oh, come now, you will tell me?'

'No, no, *no*!'

The lord laughs. 'Well then, I know you will tell my pretty little daughters.'

'Not I!' says Janos.

Now this noble lord had three little daughters, and they were very pretty. They all took to Janos, and played with him and brought him their best toys. But he didn't want their toys. He had his little sword, you see.

Said the noble lord, 'My dear little daughters, this lad has a secret, and he won't tell anyone.'

'He will tell me!' says the eldest girl.

But Janos shook his head.

'He will tell me,' says the second girl.

But Janos shook his head.

'Oh, but I'm sure you will tell *me*!' says the youngest. And she was the prettiest of the three.

But Janos said, 'I will tell no one, no one, *no one*! And I will beat anyone who asks me!'

And he scowled and felt for his little sword.

So then the noble lord said if that was the way Janos was going to behave, he must go and live with the servants till he thought better of it. And he sent him to the servants' quarters.

Janos says nothing; he is offended. But the sword said something: as Janos was being led away, that sword clanked loudly. Well there—Janos was soon merry again. He could play with the servants' children just as happily as with the noble lord's little daughters. He lives with the servants for

years: as he grows the sword and the scabbard grow with him. And he grows into a handsome youth, none handsomer.

So one day the noble lord's youngest daughter was walking in the garden, and there was Janos mowing the grass.

'Oh, oh!' says she. 'Who are you?'

He was handsomer than any young lord she had ever set eyes on.

Says he, 'I am Janos.'

Says she, 'Then tell me your secret, and I will marry you.'

'No, I won't tell anyone.'

'Tell *me*, just *me*!'

'I will *not* tell you!'

And then and there he gives her the beating he had promised her long ago.

The girl runs crying to her father. 'Oh, oh, that nasty Janos has beaten me black and blue!'

So then the noble lord said that Janos should be hanged. He had a gallows put up in the market square, and all the people crowded round to see the young man who had dared to beat the noble lord's daughter. Janos, with his hands tied behind his back, is led out by the executioner. And just as he reaches the foot of the gallows, his sword clanks against his side. What happens then? There comes a shout, 'Stop! Stop! Stop!' And a golden coach rumbles over the cobbles and pulls up underneath the gallows. And who should be sitting in that coach but the king of Hungary.

The king of Hungary leans out of the coach window, and says, 'Why would you hang that handsome lad?'

'Because, your majesty, he has beaten my youngest daughter, who only asked him to tell her his secret. I cannot pardon that.'

But the king of Hungary says, 'Pooh! *I* can pardon it! Unbind him, he shall come with me.'

So Janos was unbound, and in with him to sit in the golden coach beside the king. And as he stepped into the coach, the sword clanked for the third time.

They drove along, and they drove along, and the king said, 'Tell me, my handsome lad, what is this secret that brought you to the foot of the gallows?'

Janos said, 'I cannot tell you until it comes true.'

'Pooh! Pooh!' said the king. 'Then you shall tell my daughter. She is beautiful as the morning star. Yes, yes, you will tell her.'

But Janos said, 'Were she beautiful as the sun and the moon and all the stars in heaven I would not tell her!'

Now when they reached the king's palace, there was his daughter, picking roses in the garden.

'Oh, oh, oh!' said she. 'What a handsome youth! Have you brought him from the kingdom of the fairies?'

The king said, 'I have brought him from the foot of the gallows.' The king was astonished; the princess had never spoken so of any man.

The princess said, 'Wherever you brought him from, he shall be my husband.'

Well, it made the king's head spin, it did, to hear the princess speak so of a beggarly nobody.

'Have you taken leave of your wits, my girl?' says he. 'The lad is nothing but a servant. *And* a stubborn one! He has a secret he will tell to no one.'

'But he will tell me!' says the princess. And she smiled most lovingly. 'Dear lad,' says she, 'I will keep your secret safe in my heart!'

The king said, 'That's enough!' He sent the princess indoors. He lodged Janos in the summer-house and put him to work in the gardens.

So next day the princess put on her finest dress and went to where Janos was working. She looked so beautiful that the spade dropped from Janos's hand. He stood gazing at her, and had no word to say.

'Tell me, you whom I love,' says she, 'what is this wonderful secret? Whisper it in my ear, and I will give you a kiss.'

'Oh, my beautiful one, do not ask me!' says he. 'Go away

whilst you may go unharmed! I have kept my secret all these years. I cannot and I will not tell it now.'

But she kept on and on, 'Tell me! Tell me!' And what did he do at last but up and slap her face so hard that her nose bled.

And she shrieked with pain and rage and ran to tell the king.

When the king saw the blood from his daughter's nose running down onto her dress, he shouted, 'For this I will starve that lad to death!'

And he called workmen and bid them build a tower with neither door nor window. And in this tower Janos was bricked up to be starved to death. But although Janos had made her nose bleed, the princess still loved him, and she bribed one of the masons to leave a brick loose. And every day she took food, and ran, pulled out the loose brick, and passed in the food to Janos.

And every day the king sent a messenger to stand outside the tower and call, 'Ho! You inside there! Are you dead yet?'

And every day the sword clanked, and Janos answered, 'No, not yet!'

The king said, 'There is some magic about this! It must be his ghost speaking!'

But soon troubles came so thick and fast upon the king that he forgot about Janos. For you must know that the Sultan of Turkey coveted the kingdom of Hungary: and now there came a messenger from the Sultan, bearing a letter and three little bamboo shoots.

The king read the letter. What did it say? It said, 'King of Hungary, I send you these three shoots cut from the same bamboo. Tell me now which grew nearest the root, which in the middle, and which at the top. If you can tell me: well. If you cannot tell me, I will set my army on the march and take your kingdom from you.'

The king takes the bamboo shoots in his hands, stares at them, turns them over, measures them. Lack the day! There is not one jot of difference between those shoots. What can he

do? He has but a little army; the Sultan has a large one. Must he now lose his kingdom? He wails, beats his breast.

Said the princess, 'What is the matter, Papa, that you wail and beat your breast?'

Said the king, 'How should I not wail? The Sultan of Turkey will kill me and take my kingdom!' And he showed her the letter and the bamboo shoots.

The princess said, 'Do not despair, Papa; there must be an answer. If we keep calm, we may find it out.'

And off she ran to the tower, pulled out the loose brick, and whispered, 'Janos! Janos!'

'I am here, beloved. What would you?'

Then she told him about the sultan's letter and the bamboo shoots, and Janos said:

'Go to your bed and sleep calmly, my princess. And in the morning tell your father that you dreamed. And your dream was this: you put the bamboo shoots into warm water; one sinks to the bottom; that is the one that grew nearest the root. One neither sinks nor comes to the surface; that is the shoot that was cut from the middle. One floats on the surface; that is the one that came from the top.'

The princess did as Janos had bidden her. She went to her bed, slept, rose, went to her father.

'Papa, I have had a dream.'

And she told him.

The king put the bamboo shoots into warm water. Sure enough, one sank, one rose to the surface, one neither sank nor rose. The king cut notches in the bamboos, and sent them back by the messenger to the Sultan.

The Sultan was vexed; he gnawed his beard. But he couldn't send his army against the king, because the king had answered truly.

But the Sultan still coveted the kingdom of Hungary. He waited a year, and then he sent the messenger again, leading three foals, and carrying a letter.

The king of Hungary read the letter: 'I send you three

foals. Tell me which was born first, which was born second, which was born last. If you can tell me—well! If you cannot tell me, I will take your kingdom from you.'

The king looked at the foals; they were all of one size, and as alike as three peas in a pod. What was he to do? He wailed and beat his breast.

The princess said, 'Do not despair, Papa! There must be an answer. If we keep calm we shall find it.'

And off she runs to the tower again, pulls out the loose brick, and whispers, 'Janos! Janos!'

'I am here, beloved. What would you?'

So she told him, and he said, 'Tonight, my princess, when you have gone to your bed, feign sleep. Then jump up and scream, scream, till the king hears you. Tell him you dreamed that you saw him seized by the Turks because he could not answer the riddle about the foals. You saw the Sultan raise his scimitar to cut off your father's head—then, all of a sudden, the lad who was shut up in the tower comes bounding out, and answers the riddle.'

Well the princess did that. But the king wailed: 'The lad is not alive! He cannot be alive!' All the same he had the tower pulled down; and there was Janos, alive and smiling.

'What is your will, O king?'

The king thrust the sultan's letter at him. 'Read, read, and help me if you can!'

'Yes, I can help you,' says Janos. 'Fetch me these foals.'

The foals were brought. There was not a single hair on one different from a hair on the others. The king wailed: 'There, you see! You see!'

But Janos said, 'Bring here three stone troughs. Fill one trough with grass, one with hay, the third with oats.'

They did that, and the foals trotted up each to a separate trough, and began to eat. And Janos said, 'The one who eats the oats was born first. The one who eats the hay was born next. The one who is nibbling at the grass was born last. Set a mark on the foals, and send them back.'

So the foals were marked and sent back to Turkey. The markings were right, and the Sultan couldn't declare war. But he was determined to get the kingdom of Hungary. So what did he do? He sent for a witch with an iron nose.

And the witch with the iron nose said, 'It is not the king who guessed your riddles. He is much too stupid. The one who has guessed them is a lad called Janos. And that lad, if he lives, will be king of Hungary. If you want Hungary for yourself, you must get Janos here, and kill him.'

So the Sultan sent his messenger back to Hungary to tell the king that he must deliver up Janos. Otherwise it would be war. The king shook with fear and said to Janos, 'My lad, you have helped me—but what can I do?'

Janos laughed. 'Fear nothing, my king. I will go. But first find me twin brothers, exactly alike, and of my height and build.'

Riders were sent out to scour the country, and they came back not with two brothers, but with four, all so alike that not one could be told from the other. And Janos said to his sword, 'Oh my sword, which has never failed me! Give me a face now like to these brothers.'

And the sword clanked, and Janos had the face he asked for. Now of all the five lads none knew which was which.

Then Janos had five suits made, exactly alike. The lads put them on, and all five set out for Turkey. They arrived at the palace, and were brought before the Sultan.

The Sultan gazed from one to the other. 'But—but,' said he, 'which of you is Janos?'

Said one, 'I am Janos.' Said another, 'I am Janos.' Said the third and the fourth and the fifth, 'I am Janos.' And all they did, they did in the same manner. And all they said, they spoke in the same words.

The Sultan went to the witch with the iron nose. 'Here have come five lads, claiming to be Janos. I cannot tell which is the real Janos. What can I do?'

The witch said, 'I'll soon find out for you!'

And she made herself invisible, and went to stand against the wall in the room where the lads slept.

So, as they were getting into their beds, Janos laughed and said to the other lads, 'Well done, my friends! We can sleep in peace—we have nothing to fear.'

But when they slept, the witch came from against the wall and cut off a lock of Janos's hair. Then she went to the Sultan. 'The one who lacks this lock of hair is Janos,' said she.

The Sultan rejoiced. In the morning he sent for the five lads. In they come, bow low to the Sultan—what is this? On every one of those five heads a lock is missing. Yes, Janos had seen to that, when he woke and found what the witch had done.

So that evening the witch with the iron nose made herself invisible again, and stood against the wall in the lads' bedroom. The lads came in, chatted freely: easy now to distinguish Janos by what he says. The witch cut a button from his coat and went to the Sultan.

'The one who lacks this coat button is Janos,' said she.

But Janos is not blind; in the morning he misses his coat button. And when the lads go down to breakfast with the Sultan, there is a button missing on every coat.

The witch tried a third time. She cut a slit in Janos's coat sleeve. No good at all! In the morning when the lads went down to breakfast, there were all five coats with the same slit in the same place. So then the Sultan went to the witch and bawled, 'Call yourself a witch, old iron nose! You are nothing but a botcher!'

And he ordered the five lads to go back to Hungary.

But he sent a messenger galloping after them with a note to the king. The note said, 'Janos must come alone to Turkey, or the Sultan will send an army to fetch him.' The king wailed, the princess wept, but Janos laughed. Said he, 'I will go, and I will come back.'

So off he goes, and by and by arrives at the Sultan's palace. The old witch with the iron nose was waiting for him at the gate.

'Ho, ho! my fine fellow,' she says, 'you won't come out of this gate again!'

But the sword clanked, and Janos passed her by without a glance.

As he crosses the threshold, what does he see? Fifteen armed Turks barring his way. But the sword clanks: it darts from its scabbard and cuts off all their heads. Then it goes quietly back into the scabbard again.

The Sultan said to the witch, 'What can we do against such a fellow?'

The witch said, 'I will steal the sword from him.'

So that night the witch goes creeping, creeping into the room where Janos is sleeping. The sword hangs by the bed. The witch puts out her hand to take the sword; she touches the hilt—the sword leaps from the scabbard and cuts off her iron nose.

So she fled howling.

She went to the Sultan and told him to gather together as many armed men as would fill the dining-hall; so that when Janos came down to breakfast, they might seize his sword and make him prisoner.

And Janos came down to breakfast. What happened? The armed men rushed upon him from every side, the sword clanked, leaped from its scabbard, and cut off all their heads.

'Go away! Go away! Go away!' shrieked the Sultan. 'Out of my kingdom with you!'

And Janos laughed, and went.

So on his way back to Hungary, what should he see but his princess coming to meet him at the head of her father's little army. For she had said to the king, 'If you will not march to rescue Janos, *I* will!' So there she is, dressed up in uniform, riding at the head of the troops like any general.

'No need to go a step farther, my beautiful one,' says Janos. And he tells her all that has happened. The princess claps her hands, the soldiers cheer and cheer. They lead Janos back in triumph into the city.

And the king of Hungary said, 'I resign! I resign! I am old and stupid. You are better fit to rule a kingdom than I am. You shall marry my daughter and be king in my stead.'

So Janos married the princess and was crowned king of Hungary. And the first thing he did after the coronation was to set out on a visit to his mother.

He set off in a golden coach with a great company of outriders; and when this gay company drew up in front of the widow's little house, and the handsome lad whom she did not know, leaped from the golden coach and kissed her hand—well, she was scared!

But Janos said, 'Mother, Mother, I am king Janos, and I have come at last to tell you my dream. I dreamed that I

should become king of Hungary. I would not tell you my dream: you beat me, and I cried. But if I had told you, you would not have beaten me. If you had not beaten me, I should not have cried. If I had not cried, the noble lord would not have taken me away; and if I had not been taken away, I should never have become king of Hungary. So was I not right to keep my secret?'

'Yes, my son, you were right.'

'Then step into the coach and sit beside me, Mother!'

So Janos took his mother to court; and the queen, the old king's daughter, greeted her with smiles. And the old king said to her, 'I have nothing now to fill my mind. Since Janos has married my daughter, you had better marry me.'

And she did. And they all lived happily.

The Witch and the Swan Maiden

A young king went out a-hunting and he came to a lake. On the lake a big white bird was swimming. It was a swan.

Now swans didn't live in that country, and the king had never seen one before. He drew his bow to shoot; but the swan cried out, 'Oh do not, do not kill me!'

'Then come to me alive, you beautiful bird,' said the king.

And the swan came to him, and he took it up and carried it to his palace.

In the palace there lived a witch. This witch wanted to be queen, and she had taken the shape of an elegant courtly dame that she might charm the king. But the king was more charmed by the swan than he had ever been by her. So when the witch saw the king fondling the swan, she turned all hot with jealousy and said, 'Such birds make delicious eating! Come, we'll have it roasted and served up for your dinner!'

The King said, 'I would rather keep it for a pet.'

'A pet indeed!' cried the witch. 'Your majesty can know nothing about swans. They are bad-tempered and dangerous. If you make a pet of the creature, it will one day peck your royal eyes out.'

The witch had such power over the young king that he believed everything she told him. So he said, 'Oh well, in that case, yes, I suppose it must be killed. But it does seem a great pity.'

The witch snatched up the swan and carried it to the kitchen. 'Ha, my pretty bird, I will cut your throat myself!'

She went to whet a knife. What happened? The swan turned three somersaults. It is no swan now, but the most beautiful maiden ever you saw. And the maiden runs out of the kitchen, finds the king, and flings herself at his feet.

'Who are you?' cried the king, all dazed by her beauty.

'I am your swan,' says she. 'I lived in the land of the fairies with my mother and my two sisters. But I was curious to see the world, and I left them and flew away. Do not, oh do not have me killed!'

The king took her two hands and raised her to her feet.

'*Have you killed*, my lovely one! I will never have you killed! If you are willing you shall be my queen. For I do not think there exists on earth another maiden as beautiful as you are!'

And the maiden said, 'Indeed I am willing to be your queen.'

So they were married. And what of the witch? The witch hid her rage in her heart, and bided her time.

By and by the queen had a little son. And that was a great happiness for her and the king.

Now the king had to go on a journey, and he said to that bad wicked dame who was the witch, 'My lady, I know you will take great care of my wife and my little son. I leave them in your special charge.'

And the witch answered, 'I will care for them as if they were my own children.'

So the king sets out on his journey with an easy mind.

But the queen is melancholy after the king has left her. She shuts herself up in the palace, counting the days to the king's return. So one morning the witch comes to her and says, 'My queen, the sun is shining. It is not right that you should mope indoors. Come, let us walk out into the garden, that we may listen to the singing of birds, and smell the sweetness of the flowers.'

The queen said, 'I do well enough as I am.'

The witch said, 'My sweet queen, would you grieve the king by fretting and losing your beauty?'

The queen sighed and said, 'Very well, I will walk in the garden.'

And they went out together.

At the bottom of the garden was a deep well. The witch

stood by the well and said, 'My queen, the fresh air has brought back the colour to your cheeks. Now you are even more beautiful than you were on that day when you changed from a swan into a maiden. Bend down, look at your face mirrored in the still water and tell me if I am not right?'

The queen stoops to look at her reflection in the well. The witch takes her by the feet and throws her in, head first.

And the water closed over her.

'Drown, drown, drown!' chuckled the witch.

She went back into the palace and said to the nurse, 'Bring the baby to me. The queen has left him in my charge. She has wearied of us all and gone away.'

And she took the baby to her own room, and looked after him very carefully.

When the king came back, the witch carried the baby to him and said, 'See how bonny he has grown in your absence. Have I not looked after him well?'

The king said, 'But where is the queen?'

And the witch answered, 'Oh my king, my king! Our beautiful young queen pined so greatly for her old home in the land of the fairies that one day she changed back into a swan and flew away. I pray you not to grieve, but to rejoice in your son.'

'Not grieve!' cried the king. '*Not grieve!*'

He gets on his horse, gallops to the lake where he first saw the swan, and calls—calls. 'My queen, where are you? My Swan Maiden, where are you? Oh come, come, come back to me!' But no one answers.

A month passed, a year passed, two years passed: the king went again and again to the lake, and still there was no sight nor sound of the Swan Maiden. And all this time the witch was looking after the king's little son with the utmost care.

'Poor bonny boy,' says she, 'it is sad for him to have no mother!'

The king sighs. 'Yes, it is sad.'

In the third year the king went no more to the lake. He had

given up hope of seeing his wife again. He thought much of what the witch had said about his little son having no mother; and one day, seeing the witch with the child in her arms, he said to her, 'You love my little lad dearly?'

The witch answered, 'Heaven knows how dearly!'

And the king said, 'Since his mother has deserted him, will you marry me and take her place?'

The witch—that courtly dame—cast down her eyes. 'Your will is my will, oh king!'

And the king fixed the day for their wedding.

Now you must know that out of the well into which the queen had been thrown, there grew a willow-tree with three branches: one branch in the middle, one branch reaching out to the right, and one to the left. And outside the garden there lived a peasant who owned a little flock of sheep. One day this peasant sent his son to lead the sheep to pasture. And as the boy was passing by the garden wall, he put his hand in his pocket to take out his flute, which he was very fond of playing.

Well, what would you? The flute is not in his pocket. The boy has left it at home, or else he has lost it. So, seeing the willow-tree growing out of the well, he jumps over the garden wall, runs to the well, and cuts the middle branch of the willow. Then he jumps back over the wall, and sits down on the grass to make himself a new flute. He cut and chipped and fashioned the branch till he had a flute to his liking; and then he put the flute to his lips to see how it would sound.

Heaven save us—the flute is playing of itself! It is not only playing, it is singing. And this is its song:

Oh boy, do not blow too hard!
My heart is aching for my little son,
My little son whom I left in the cradle,
To be nursed on the lap of a wicked witch.

When the boy heard these words, you're sure he was scared! He left the sheep and ran home to tell his father.

Said the peasant, 'What nonsense are you talking? Give me the flute! Go back and mind the sheep!'

So the boy gave the flute to his father and went back to tend the sheep. And the peasant thought to himself, 'The lad is no liar! What does it all mean?'

So he takes the flute and puts it to his lips. And lo, before he has so much as blown one breath into it, the flute is playing of itself, and singing the same sad little song.

The peasant doesn't know what to make of it. He, too, is frightened. He locks the flute away in a cupboard.

Then came the day of the king's wedding, and all the musicians in the country were invited to come and play at the banquet. A troop of these musicians passed by the peasant's hut on their way to the palace. They were laughing and singing.

Said the peasant, 'Whither away so merrily?'

And they answered, 'To play at the king's banquet. There to eat and drink and be paid in gold.'

Said the peasant, 'May I make one of your company?'

Said they, 'Can you play an instrument?'

Said the peasant, 'Yes, I have a marvellous flute.'

Said they, 'Come then!'

And the peasant fetched the flute from the cupboard and went along with the musicians to the palace.

The boy, the peasant's son, wants to go also. But he has no flute. So he jumps over the wall into the palace garden, runs to the well, and cuts the right-hand branch from the willow tree. He cuts and he chips and he fashions the branch most carefully, until he has a flute to his liking. But when he puts this flute to his lips—blow he softly, blow he hard—it will not play a note. So he throws it away and goes back to tend the sheep.

Meanwhile, at the palace, there was feasting and song and music and merriment. Sometimes all the musicians played together, sometimes one would play alone. But our peasant sits pondering with the flute on his knee. He is unwilling, you

see, to put it to his lips, for he is doubtful of what that flute may do.

By and by the king noticed the peasant sitting idle. Says he, 'Come, old man, those who sit idle receive no pay! Give us a tune!'

The peasant trembled and said, 'My king, I am afraid.'

Said the king, 'Can you not play then?'

'My king, I can play. But I think the flute is bewitched.'

The king laughed and said, 'Let us hear it, that we may judge.'

So the peasant puts the flute to his lips. And before he has blown one breath into the mouth-piece, the flute begins to sing:

O man, do not blow too hard!
My heart is aching for my little son,
For my little son whom I left in the cradle,
To be nursed on the lap of a wicked witch.

Everyone was astonished. Even the witch—that courtly dame, the king's bride—was astonished. True, she alone knew the meaning of the flute's song: but the queen was drowned in the well, and what had the flute to do with that?

The king, greatly troubled, tossed a gold piece to the peasant, and said, 'Let me see that flute.'

The peasant lays the flute in the king's hands: the king puts it to his lips, and immediately it begins to sing:

O my dear husband, do not blow too hard!
My heart is aching for our little son,
For our little son whom I left in the cradle,
To be nursed on the lap of a wicked witch.

'Truly this is most marvellous!' whispered the guests to one another.

But the courtly dame, the witch, turned to the king and said, 'My noble king, you are making a laughing stock of

yourself in front of your guests! Throw the flute in the fire!'

And the king answered, 'No, I will not throw it in the fire. There is something here that I don't understand. But perhaps you may be cleverer than I am. Come, take the flute and try it!'

'My noble king,' says the witch, 'you must pardon me, but I will do no such thing.'

'You will do as I tell you!' cries the king, getting angry.

So willy-nilly, the witch—that courtly dame, the king's bride—has to take the flute and put it to her lips. She tries to cover all the stops with her fingers, so that the flute may make no sound. But it at once begins to sing:

O, my enemy, do not blow too hard!
My heart is aching for my little son,
For my little son whom I left in the cradle,
To be nursed on your lap, you cruel one,
Who cast me into the well, thinking to drown me,
But . . .

The flute sang no more, because the witch, in a furious rage, flung it to the ground with so much force that it broke in half. 'That is the end of *you*!' she screamed, forgetting all her courtly manners.

But it was not the end. Lo, where the flute had fallen stands a beautiful woman—the very queen whom the witch had thrown into the well.

'My wife! My wife!' cried the king. And he leaped up from the table and caught her in his arms. 'I don't understand anything! I don't care about anything, except that you are my wife, and have come back to me!'

'Never, never to leave you, if you will drive that witch away,' said the queen.

'She shall not live!' cried the king. And he drew his sword to kill her.

But his sword was scarcely out of its scabbard when the

witch filled the room with a darkness: the people sat and shuddered in the darkness; the king and queen clung together. And when the darkness lifted, the witch had vanished.

Bah! Let her go! What does it matter? She was never seen again.

So the king, the queen, and the little prince lived in great happiness ever after.

A Handful of Hay

Once upon a time there was an old lord who owned a rich estate, and he made a will. The will said, 'My rich estate is not to be divided up. Let each of my three sons manage it for a year in turn. And under whichsoever of my sons the estate prospers most, let that one own it, and provide for his brothers as is fitting.'

So when the old lord died, there was the will. And the three sons had to abide by it.

Now the two elder brothers thought themselves smart lads; and they thought their youngest brother, Nicko, a fool. But they were not such smart lads as they thought, nor was Nicko such a fool as they believed.

The eldest brother managed the estate for the first year, and under his management everything went wrong. He fell into debt, and by the time he had got out of it, he had sold half the estate.

So then the second brother said, 'Now it's my turn! You'll see, I'll soon set everything humming!' And he did set everything humming, but not in the way he intended. He managed worse than the first brother, and long before his time of management was up, the brothers had nothing left but the house they lived in, and one little field of hay not yet ripe for cutting.

Said the eldest brother, 'We must guard that hayfield well. And in a day or two, when the hay is ripe for cutting, we will sell it and buy bread. I myself will keep watch tonight, lest a thief come in the dark and steal all we have left.'

So that night he went to the hayfield, lay down under a tree that grew by the hedge, rolled himself in a cloak, and gazed at the stars. . . . All quiet, all peaceful: he yawns, he shuts his eyes, he falls asleep.

Then there comes a rustling and a stamping, and a jingling, and a breathing, and a snorting. But the eldest brother sleeps on. He hears nothing. And in the morning half of that field of hay is cropped quite close.

Next evening the second brother said, 'Tonight *I* will watch. And I shan't be such a fool as to fall asleep!' But fall asleep he did, for all his boasting; and in the morning all that was left of that field of ripening hay was one little handful of long grass in the corner under the tree.

Each of the two elder brothers blamed the other; but Nicko, the youngest, said, 'What's gone is gone. Tonight I will watch over that last handful of hay.'

His brothers mocked him. 'A handful of hay! What use is a handful of hay to you or anybody?'

And Nicko answered, 'Little beginnings can have big endings. Who knows—a handful of hay may turn out to be a fortune.'

'Then you may keep it for your fortune!' sneered the brothers. 'As for us, we have still the goods that are in the house.'

And they stripped the house of everything that was in it, and went off to the town to sell whatever they could. They would have sold the house itself, too; but no one would buy it.

So there is Nicko left in the empty house, with only a bite of bread and cheese and a jug of water.

That night he went to watch in the bare hayfield. But he didn't lie down under the tree; he climbed up into it, and set himself astride a branch. 'A hard bed,' says he. 'But better a hard bed than a soft sleep.'

So he looks up through the leaves of the tree at the stars, and down through the leaves of the tree at the bare field, and keeps himself awake to stop himself from falling off the branch.

At midnight comes a rustling and a stamping, and a jingling, and a breathing and a snorting. Nicko looks down.

What does he see? A great white stallion, saddled and bridled with jewelled harness, with gold shoes on his four feet, and a silver star on his forehead. The stallion comes trotting up under the tree, stretches out his neck and lowers his head to crop the handful of long grass that was left there. But Nicko slides from his branch and catches the stallion by the bridle. 'Not so fast, not so fast, my friend! You just come along with me! A good turn you have done us by stripping our hayfield! Tomorrow I take you to market and sell you; and the price you will fetch will repay us, and more than repay us, for the lost hay!'

And the stallion answered, 'Which would you have, Nicko—a little money in your pocket tomorrow, or a fortune at the year's end?'

Says Nicko, 'A fortune at the year's end, might I come by it.'

'Then don't sell me, Nicko, or you will lose that fortune. Lift my forelock and you'll find a silver hair. Pull it out and keep it carefully. When you have need of me, set fire to the hair, and whilst it is still glowing, I shall be with you.'

So Nicko lets go the bridle to pull out the silver hair. And before he could catch at the bridle again, the stallion galloped off. But as he galloped off he turned his head and called, 'Tomorrow you will hear some news. Attend to that news, Nicko!'

Well, well, Nicko's mind was all in a puzzle, thinking may be he'd been a fool to let that stallion go; thinking may be he hadn't. But he kept the silver hair carefully, and in the morning he strolled over to the town to listen for any news that might be coming his way.

The town was crowded; all the people were out in the streets, and the king's messengers were hurrying up and down, ringing hand bells and calling out, '*Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!* Our lord the king is sick and like to die!'

'Well,' thinks Nicko, 'that's no good news at all!'

But what else were the messengers calling? 'Our lord the king has dreamed of the king pelican—on its head a golden

crown, round its neck a sparkling jewel. Our lord the king dreamed that he immersed this jewel in water and washed, and was healed. Therefore whosoever shall bring that jewel to the king shall receive his daughter in marriage and reign after him.'

'Ha!' says Nicko to himself. 'This is news indeed!'

So back he goes to his bare hayfield, takes out the stallion's silver hair, strikes a light from his tinder box, and burns the hair. And whilst the hair is still glowing—up out of nowhere gallops the stallion.

'Well, Nicko, so you heard some news?'

'I did, and I've a mind to get that jewel.'

'Then Nicko we must take a journey to the purple lake. The animals that gather round that lake can tell us where the king pelican is, and how to get the jewel. The animals bathe in the lake, but they can't drink of it, because the water is poisoned. Sweeten the water for them, and they will tell you all you ask.'

'Ho! Ho!' says Nicko. 'That's easier said than done—to sweeten poisoned water!'

'It can be done, Nicko,' says the stallion. 'Go, fetch a knife and cut this handful of hay. Take the hay under your arm, put the knife in your pocket, and jump on my back.'

So Nicko did that: he fetched the knife, cut the hay, tucked the hay under his arm, put the knife in his pocket, and jumped onto the stallion's back.

'Whither away?' says he.

'Up onto the hills, Nicko, and into the pine wood that crowns them. In the pine wood there runs a doe with golden horns, seeking fodder for her two young ones. If you give the fawns that handful of hay, the doe in gratitude will give you whatever you ask.'

'And what shall I ask?'

'The tip of one of her golden horns, Nicko, to sweeten the poisoned water.'

Away they galloped up into the hills. And in the pine wood

that crowned them, Nicko sees two little fawns lying under a tree. So down he gets and shakes out the hay in front of them.

The two little fawns ate up all the hay: they were just chewing the last mouthfuls when the doe with the golden horns came running up.

The doe looked at the fawns and said, 'If I knew who had fed my children, I would give him all he asks!'

Says Nicko, 'Then give me the tip of a golden horn, for it was I who fed them.'

The doe wasn't willing; she was proud of her golden horns. But the stallion said, 'Give it to him, your horn will grow a new tip!' So then she bent her pretty head, and *hey presto!* Nicko's knife was out, and the tip of one golden horn was in his hand.

'Now away like the wind,' said the stallion. 'We have a long journey before us.'

Away they went, away and away, and over the hills and far away, till they came to a plain where the sun burned hot. Beyond the plain was a great lake. This lake was a nasty purple colour; and all around the lake, and plunging in and out of the water, were multitudes of beasts—lions, tigers, foxes, wolves, wild cattle, sheep and goats. They cooled their hot bodies, but they couldn't slake their thirst, because the water was poisoned; and they roared and howled and bleated in their raging thirst, so that it was pitiful to hear them.

'Throw that golden horn tip into the lake, Nicko,' says the stallion.

Nicko threw the golden horn tip into the lake. Immediately the purple colour went out of the water: it was now crystal clear. The thirsty animals drank and drank, and when they had slaked their thirst they cried out, 'If we knew who had done this, we would give him all he asks!'

Says Nicko, 'It was I who did it. Now tell me where I can find the king pelican—he who wears a crown of gold, and hung round his neck a sparkling jewel? And how can I get that jewel?'

'I know where the king pelican is,' says an old tiger. 'But how to get that jewel from his neck I can't tell you. For the pelican is guarded by three fierce ones—a giant, a lioness, and a dragon. Should you kill the giant, you have still to fight the lioness; and should you overcome the lioness, there is still the dragon, whose strength is so great that he can swallow all the world.'

Nicko's heart sank a bit at that news. But then a fox spoke up and said, 'I can tell you how to deal with the giant!' And he nipped away and nipped back again dragging a great sack. 'In this sack is a hunk of meat and a cask of wine,' says he. 'The giant is greedy. Give him to eat and drink. And when his appetitite is sated, he will fall asleep, and you can safely pass him.'

'Thanks to you, my fox!' says Nicko.

And he set the sack up on the back of the stallion.

Then a lion spoke up. 'And I can tell you how to get on the right side of the lioness. She has two little cubs and she feeds them well. But they crave for sweetmeats, and those she can't give them.'

Away bounds the lion and comes bounding back again, carrying a big bag of sweet cakes. 'Give these to the cubs,' says he, 'and the lioness will let you pass.'

'Thanks to you, my lion!' says Nicko.

And he sets the bag of sweet cakes up on the white stallion's back, beside the sack.

'Nicko,' says the stallion, 'this is a load! If I am to carry you as well, don't burden my back with any more luggage!'

'No need for more luggage,' says a huge ram. 'I can tell you how to get the better of the dragon. If you do as I say, you won't have to fight him. Now listen: in the dragon's orchard is an apple-tree, and hanging on the tree is a sword no man has the strength to pull out of its scabbard. It is from the apples on that tree that the dragon gets his strength. Pluck an apple and eat it, Nicko, and you will become as strong as the dragon. Then you will be able to draw the sword from its

scabbard. And when the dragon sees you with that sword, he won't want to fight you! Not he! He will take you to the king pelican.'

'And must I kill the king pelican to get the jewel?'

The huge ram laughed. 'No, no, just show him the sword, Nicko—just show him the sword.'

'Thanks to you, my ram,' said Nicko. 'Good-bye—and may all go well with me!'

'Good-bye, Nicko, and may all go well with you!' shouted the animals, plunging back to frolic in the lake.

And Nicko rode off on the white stallion.

He rode and he rode, and where he went no man could tell you, not even Nicko himself. But the stallion knew the way, because the tiger at the lake had told him. And they came at last to where a giant stood straddled across the road. The giant had a spiked club in his hand, and when he saw Nicko he whirled the club round his head and roared out, 'Turn about! No one passes!'

Says Nicko, 'I have brought you a present from my friend the fox.' And he takes the great hunk of meat and the cask of wine out of the sack and gives them to the giant.

The giant sat him down and ate and drank. And when he had drunk all the wine out of the cask, his head nodded, his eyes blinked: he could no more keep awake than he could fly, because the cunning fox had mixed a sleepy draught with the wine.

So there lay the giant sprawled across the road. And Nicko and the stallion gave one leap over his great body, and galloped on their way.

At the end of the road they came to a wood. And there were two little lion cubs having a boxing-match under a tree.

'I have brought you a present from my friend the lion,' said Nicko. And he took the sweet cakes out of the bag and gave them to the cubs.

The cubs gobbled up the cakes, and they were nosing up the last crumbs when a lioness sprang from behind the tree.

'If I knew who had done this, I would give him all he asks!' said she.

'It was I, Nicko, who did it. All I ask is leave to go on my way.'

The lioness said, 'Go on your way, Nicko, with my blessing!'

And they rode on.

Soon they came to an orchard with a high wall round it.

Said the stallion, 'Hold on tight, Nicko!'

Nicko holds on tight: the stallion gives one mighty leap. There they are now, over the wall, and down in the orchard among the apple-trees.

There were so many trees, and they so loaded with apples, that Nicko couldn't think which apple to pluck. But he saw a glint of gold under one tree, and that was the scabbard of the dragon's sword. He thought to draw the sword from the scabbard. Could he? No, he couldn't. So he plucked an apple from the tree and ate it; and then such strength flowed through him that he felt he could spin the world on his little finger. Now he tried the sword again: and drew it from the scabbard with a flick of his wrist.

Then came a mighty wind: the trunks of the trees shuddered, the branches tossed and groaned, the apples fell off in showers. Down flew the dragon—and such a dragon! His eyes flamed, his nostrils breathed out fire, and there seemed no end to the coils of his huge body.

'Who dares to steal into my orchard?' he yelled. Then he saw the sword in Nicko's hand, and his rage melted into a foolish grin.

'How do?' says he, holding up a great clawed foot.

'How do?' says Nicko. 'A pleasure to meet you, I'm sure!'

'The pleasure is mine,' says the dragon. 'And what might you be seeking?'

'Oh, just a little thing,' says Nicko. 'Just the sparkling jewel that hangs round the neck of the king pelican.'

'I don't want to give you that,' says the dragon.

'Shall we fight then?' says Nicko, waving the sword.

'No, no, no!' cries the dragon. 'Drop that sword! It dazzles my eyes!'

But Nicko didn't drop the sword. Not he! He wasn't such a fool. 'It's either the jewel or a fight,' says he. 'Take it or leave it.'

'But the king pelican will snap and scratch,' whimpered the dragon.

'I'll soon put a stop to his snapping and scratching,' says Nicko, bold as a lion.

So then the dragon waddled humbly through the orchard, and Nicko followed, and they came into a pavilion of rose-coloured silk. There was a fountain in the pavilion drizzling down a rain of silver drops, and the king pelican stood under the drizzle, washing himself.

'Go away!' shrieked the pelican. 'Can't a gentleman take his bath in private?'

'It's not my doing,' says the dragon.

'Whose then?' shrieked the pelican.

'Mine,' says Nicko. 'I've come for the jewel round your neck.'

The pelican made a rush at Nicko to snap him and scratch him; but when that pelican saw the sword in Nicko's hand he turned meek and said, 'Oh, beg pardon, I'm sure—no offence meant.'

'None taken,' says Nicko. 'The jewel, if you please.'

So then the pelican bowed his head and allowed Nicko to slip the sparkling jewel off his neck.

Nicko shouts good-bye to the dragon, runs into the orchard, and jumps onto the back of the white stallion.

'Hold tight, Nicko!' The stallion gives a leap, they are out over the orchard wall—and hie and away for home!

When they came out on to the road, the giant was just waking from his sleep. He rushed at Nicko, waving his spiked club. But Nicko flashes the sword, and the giant drops the club and claps his hand to his eyes. So Nicko got past him all

right. The white stallion knew the way to go, though Nicko didn't; and going like the wind they soon got back to the town where the king's palace was.

The stallion trots up to the palace gates, and then says he, 'You won't be needing me any more, Nicko, so I'll be getting along.'

Says Nicko, 'Where to?'

Says the stallion, 'Ah ha! Wouldn't you like to know! But I'm not telling you, Nicko.'

And with that he gives a shake of his head and a frisk of his heels, and disappears.

Yes, he just vanished.

Nicko was sorry, but there was nothing he could do about it. So he knocked at the palace gates.

'Is the king still alive?' said he to those who opened.

'Only just,' they told him.

'I've brought the jewel from the king pelican,' says Nicko.

'Hand it over,' said they.

'Nay,' says Nicko, 'I'll take it to the king myself, if you please.'

And he did. And he got the bath ready with his own hands and laid the jewel in it. The king tottered into the bath at his last gasp, and leaped out of that bath hale and hearty. So he says to Nicko, 'Now the princess is yours, and you shall be king after me.'

'I'm not having the princess unless she's willing,' says Nicko.

'She'll be willing enough, if I say so,' said the king.

'Nay,' says Nicko, 'that won't do! Let her see me.'

So the king sent for the princess, and she came, and Nicko said, 'Are you willing to have me for a husband? Or shall I go home?'

'No,' says she. 'Don't go home!'

She took to Nicko the moment she saw him, and he took to her. So they were soon married. And Nicko, you may be sure, was a rich man now, none richer, being the king's heir. So he bought back all the land of his father's estate, and gave it to his eldest brother. And he gave the second brother another estate.

'And though you scoffed at the time,' said he to his brothers, 'you see now what has come about. . . .

'And all through a handful of hay.'

The Cock and the Hen

There was an old man, and there was an old woman, and they were neighbours. The old man had a cock, and the old woman had a hen. And this hen used to lay an egg for the old woman every morning and evening.

So, on a time, the old man had nothing to eat, and he went to the old woman and asked might he have just one egg.

An egg! What an idea! The old woman had never heard of such a thing! No, she wouldn't give to him. She wanted her eggs for herself.

Then the old man said, 'Old woman, may be the time will come when *you* will ask *me* for something. And I shan't give it you!'

The old woman said, 'Be off!'

The old man felt sad as sad, and hungry as hungry. He went to his cock. 'Oh, my cock, why don't you lay eggs?'

The cock said, 'I would if I could, master.'

So then this cock is unhappy, because he can't help the old man; and he goes to flap his wings and think things over in the king's garden.

'Cock-a-doodle-doo!' says he, flapping his wings.

The king heard and looked out of the window. 'Oh, what a handsome bird! What an ornament for my treasury!'

So the king bade his servants catch this cock and put him in his treasury.

In the treasury the cock pecked here, and he pecked there; and he found a bag full of gold sequins. So he pecks open the bag and swallows as many of those sequins as he can hold. Then he laid him down, drew up the lids of his eyes, draggled his feathers, and turned in his toes, making as if he were dead. And a servant came in and saw him, and went to the king.

'My king, your cock is dead.'

'Oh, what a pity, what a pity! Throw him on the ash heap!'

So the servant did that, and the cock lay on the ash heap, quite dead-seeming, till night. And then he gets up and goes back to the old man.

'Master,' says he, 'hang me up by my feet and slap me. May be you'll get something better than eggs.'

Well, the old man hangs the cock up by his feet, and slaps him with the flat of his hand. And at every slap the gold sequins came pouring out of the cock's beak.

'Cock-a-doodle-doo! Hip hip hurrah! Ha! Ha! Ha!' The old man is rich now, he can eat as much as he pleases. The cock crowed and crowed; the old man laughed and laughed: they played catch with the golden sequins, tossing them up against the sun.

The old woman saw them. She went to the old man. 'Old man, give me a piece of gold, just one piece!'

What an idea! The old man has never heard of such a thing! No, he won't give her any gold. He wants it all himself.

So the old woman goes back to her hen. 'Hen, why don't you lay gold sequins?'

The hen said, 'I would if I could, mistress.'

The old woman was angry. She shoo'd away the hen with her broom. So the hen goes to find the old man's cock.

'Cock, what must I do to lay gold sequins? Is it difficult?'

The cock said, 'No, it's not difficult. It's easy. You go to the king's garden, and there, in a hollow tree, you'll find a wasps' nest. Swallow down as many wasps as you can. Then bid the old woman hang you up by your toes and slap you.'

Well, the hen did all that. She went to the king's garden, found the wasps' nest, and swallowed down wasps till she was full. Then back with her to the old woman.

'Mistress, hang me up by the toes and slap me.'

The old woman hangs the hen up by her toes and slaps her, hard, hard, hard. And at every slap, out from the hen's beak buzz the wasps, angry as can be. They flew at the old woman and stung her all over. The old woman screamed and screamed. She ran away with the wasps after her.

And that old woman never came back.

So the hen went to live with the old man. And she laid an egg for the old man, morning and evening.

The Spotted Cow

Once upon a time there was a little boy who had no mother, only an old miser of a father. Now this little boy had a big appetite, and his father wouldn't give him enough to eat. And the little boy kept calling out, 'I'm hungry! I'm hungry!'

So one day his father told him, 'If you say that once again, I'll turn you out!' And that's what happened. The little boy couldn't remember not to say he was hungry, when he was hungry. So this stingy old father turned him out.

Off went the little boy (he was shedding tears you may be sure) till he came to a farm. The farmer saw him and said, 'What are you crying for?'

'I'm hungry! I want something to eat!'

The farmer said, 'If you want to eat, you must work.' And he sent the little boy into the fields to help tend the cattle. There were other lads in the fields, great big fellows, and when it came noon they all sat down on the grass and began to eat the food they had brought with them. Would you believe it?—they wouldn't give the little boy so much as a crust of bread. They said he ought to have brought his own food. And they chased him off. So he began to cry again.

Then up comes a white cow with red spots on her and says, 'Little boy, why are you crying?'

'I'm hungry!'

'Well, well, screw off my right horn. You'll find a cloth inside it. Spread the cloth, and you'll get food in plenty.'

The cow stoops down her head, and the little boy unscrews her right horn. Sure enough, there's the cloth. He lays the cloth on the grass: hey presto! A plate of meat, a loaf of bread, a lump of butter, and a cup of milk!

The little boy ate and ate, and when there was nothing left he put the cloth back in the horn, and screwed the horn

back on the cow's head. He was laughing now, not crying. That evening, when the cowherds had driven the cows home

and milked them, they all went into the farm kitchen for supper. But the little boy had eaten so much at dinner time, he couldn't swallow more than half his supper. So next morning, when it was time to drive the cows to pasture again, the

farmer's wife said, 'Since you've got such a poor appetite, I shan't waste good food on you.' And she gave him but a half share of dinner to take with him.

But, as you know, the little boy hadn't got a poor appetite, he had a good one, and by noon he was hungry. In no time he'd eaten up every crumb of the small dinner he'd been given, and was looking round for more. The other lads were still eating, and he begged each one to give him just a little, just a little! But no, they pushed him away. Then he saw the spotted cow swishing her tail and looking at him, so he ran over to her. And she sauntered off with him behind a bush, and said, 'Unscrew my right horn.' So he did, and took out the cloth and spread it; and there was the meat and the bread and the butter and the milk. And he ate and drank till he was full. That night at supper, he only ate a quarter of what was given to him, so he only got a quarter of dinner to take into the fields next day. But the cow fed him again. And he felt so happy and so full that in the evening he couldn't eat any supper at all.

Thinks the farmer's wife, 'There's something unnatural about this! The little boy must be getting food from somewhere! And she asks the other cowherds. But no, they hadn't given the little boy anything.

So then the farmer's wife bade one of the cowherds to spy on the little boy, because she thought may be he was stealing food. And when dinner time came, and the little boy went over to the spotted cow to get his meal, the spotted cow said, 'We're being spied on, my little lad.' And she went off and called all the other cows to stand round her.

But by and by the spy noticed what the cows were doing. Thinks he, 'That's mighty queer!' And he tiptoes over to see what they're about. And there is the spotted cow's horn lying on the ground, and the cloth spread, and the little boy eating up the good food for all he's worth.

So back goes the spy to the farm, and tells the farmer and his wife.

Said the farmer, 'That cow's bewitched. I must go and shoot her.'

But the cow ran away and hid.

So, in the night, when the little boy was asleep in the barn with all the other herdsmen, a lump of grass fell on his face and woke him. He looked up, and there was the spotted cow with her head poked through the window. The little boy creeps over to the window, and the spotted cow whispers, 'Come out, we must run away, or the farmer will shoot me.'

The little boy climbed out of the window and stood by the cow in the moonlight.

Says she, 'Get on my back.'

He climbs on her back, and what does she do? She shakes out two red-spotted wings and flies away with him.

She flew and she flew, over seven hills and seven dales and seven rivers, and by morning they came to a little house in a valley. A stream ran through the valley, and there was a field of hay at the side of the house.

Says the cow, 'This is our home. You go and cut the hay, and I'll set the house to rights.'

The little boy fetched a sickle from a barn and cut the hay. The cow took a broom and swept the floors till they shone. Then they shook down the hay and made themselves beds; the little boy unscrewed the cow's horn and had a good breakfast; and after that the cow went to graze on the grass by the side of the stream. What did the little boy do? He jumped into the stream and swam about and laughed.

The spotted cow and the little boy lived happily in that house for years and years. And the little boy grew into a big, strong, handsome lad.

So one day the cow said, 'My lad, it's time we tried your strength.'

She showed him a big stone bedded in the ground. Said she, 'Can you lift that?'

The lad stooped and tried: he couldn't move it.

'Then we must wait another year,' said the spotted cow.

They waited another year, and then she took him to the stone again. 'Can you lift it now?'

The lad stooped. He heaved till the sweat ran off him. He loosened the stone just a little, but he couldn't lift it.

He was so vexed that he kicked the stone, and something down under it began to laugh. So then the lad kicked the stone again, and the laughing stopped.

'No need to lose your temper,' said the cow. 'We can wait yet a third year.'

So they waited a third year. The lad was now full grown. My word, what a lad! Heroic, like the sun in his glory. When the day came to try his strength, he stooped to the stone and lifted it as easily as if it had been a cushion stuffed with feathers. He whirled the stone round his head, and flung it right out of the valley.

So then the cow said, 'Well done! But there's harder work ahead. My enemy lives down there, and it's you who must fight and kill him.'

Said the lad, 'Who is your enemy?'

Said the cow, 'A dragon with three heads. Unscrew my left horn and take out what you find in it.'

The lad unscrewed the horn and drew out a sword. It looked but an inch of a sword, but it grew and grew as he drew it out, till it became a sharp, shining weapon, fit for a hero.

'Now go down into the hole where the stone was,' said the cow. 'And your luck go with you!'

The lad went down into the hole. He came to a country of red rocks: and there was the dragon with six wings and three heads, breathing out fire and smoke from all his six nostrils.

So they fought. That was a fight! The lad at the dragon with his sharp sword, the dragon at the boy with teeth and claws, and roaring till the red rocks echoed. They fought all day, and the lad cut off two of the dragon's heads. So then the dragon flew away, and went to hide in a hollow tree. And the lad went after him.

Said he, 'Come out and finish the fight, coward!'

Said the dragon, 'No, I'm not coming out.'

So the lad went back to the spotted cow and said, 'I've cut off two of the dragon's heads, but I can't kill him. He's gone and hidden himself in a hollow tree.'

Said the cow, 'Take a load of dry grass and fill up the hollow with the half of it. Lay the other half at the foot of the tree. But first unscrew my left horn and take out what you find there.'

The lad unscrewed the cow's left horn and took out a tinder box.

Said he, 'What do I do with this?'

'Set fire to the grass,' said the cow, 'but look sharp about it. For if you give the dragon time to get out of the tree, you'll never see him again.'

The lad took the dried grass and the tinder box and went down through the hole and into the country of red rocks. The dragon looked out of the hollow tree and said, 'What are you doing with that grass?'

'Making you a bed,' said the lad. And he strewed half of the grass at the foot of the tree.

'I'm not coming out to sleep on that bed! I'm quite comfortable where I am, thank you!' said the dragon. And he went down deeper into the hollow of the tree.

'I'll say you're not coming out!' shouted the lad. And quicker than quick he rammed the rest of the dry grass into the hollow and set it alight. He set alight to the grass at the foot of the tree also. The grass blazed up, the tree caught fire, and the dragon was burnt to a cinder.

So the lad went back to tell the cow. But he couldn't find her. He searched everywhere. 'My cow! My cow! Where are you, my cow?' he called. 'I've killed the dragon!'

He searched high and low. No cow to be seen. Then he heard someone laughing, and looked behind him. A maiden stood there, lovely as the dawn.

Said she, 'What do you seek?'

'My cow, my dear cow!' said the lad. 'Her enemy is dead.'

Said the maiden, 'You'll not see your cow again. Won't I do instead?'

'No,' said the lad. 'You won't do! I want my cow!'

'Sit down by me,' said the maiden, 'and I'll tell you a story.'

The lad sat down on the grass beside the maiden. He was frowning.

'Once upon a time,' said the maiden, 'there was a little princess. She went to walk in the garden, and there came a wizard from the east in the shape of a dragon, and carried her away. "Live with me and love me," said the dragon. "And when you are old enough you shall be my wife." "I will never love you," said the little princess. "I will never be your wife." So the dragon changed her into a little spotted calf and set her down among a herd of cows. "Whilst I live you will never regain your true form," said he. "And the hero that can kill me is not yet grown." . . . And the rest of the story you can tell for yourself, my lad, if you will but use your wits.'

'Is it you, then—that princess?' said the lad.

'Yes, lad, I am that princess, and you are my hero. Stand up, take my hand, and shut your eyes.'

The lad did as she bade him. He felt himself lifted from the ground and carried through the air. When the maiden bade him open his eyes again, he was standing in front of a marble palace, and the maiden's hand was still in his.

'Welcome to your palace and your kingdom, my hero,' she said.

So they went together into the palace and got married. And he lived and reigned a happy king with his lovely queen.

Uletka

There was a woman who was unhappy because she had no children. And one day, as she watched some children playing in the sunlight, she said, 'Dear Sun, only send me a little girl now, and when she is twelve years old you may take her again.'

And the Sun sent her a little girl called Uletka. The woman loved the little girl dearly; and as the years passed she loved her more and more, so that by the time Uletka was twelve years old, the woman felt she couldn't part with her.

But Uletka went out to gather herbs, and the Sun came to her and said, 'Uletka, when you go home, tell your mother to remember what she promised me.'

So Uletka went home and said, 'Mother, whilst I was gathering herbs I met a fine tall gentleman, and he was all glittering. He said I must tell you to remember what you had promised him.'

'Oh, no! Oh, no!' cried the woman. 'Come indoors, and stay indoors!' And she shut up all the windows and doors in the house, and stuffed up all the chinks with rags, and kept Uletka hidden away in the dark. But she forgot to close up one keyhole, and through it the Sun sent a ray of light into the house. And the ray of light caught up Uletka, and carried her away.

So Uletka went to live with the Sun in his shining house.

One day the Sun sent Uletka into the barn to fetch straw to bed down his golden horses. Uletka walked over a pile of straw; the straw made a sighing sound under her feet, and Uletka said:

'As sighs this straw under my feet, so sighs my heart after my mother!'

She stayed in the barn a long time, thinking of her mother.

When she came back into the Sun's house, the Sun said, 'Eh, Uletka, where have you been so long?'

Uletka said, 'My slippers are too big, I couldn't walk faster.'

Then the Sun made Uletka's slippers smaller.

Another day the Sun sent Uletka to the spring to fetch water. And Uletka sat by the spring and said, 'As flows this water from the spring, so flows my heart with longing for my mother!'

She lingered by the spring a long time, thinking of her mother. When she came back with the water, the Sun said, 'Eh, Uletka, why have you been so long away?'

Uletka said, 'My petticoat is too long, and hinders me in walking.'

So the Sun shortened Uletka's petticoat.

Another day the Sun sent Uletka to the cobbler's to fetch him some golden sandals. And as Uletka was carrying the sandals back, the leather creaked. And Uletka sighed and said, 'As creaks this leather under my hand, so creaks my heart after my mother!'

She didn't want to go back to the Sun's house: she lingered and loitered by the way. When at last she came in, the Sun said, 'Eh, Uletka, why do you come home so late?'

Uletka said, 'My hood is too wide; it falls over my eyes, and I lose the way.'

So the Sun made Uletka's hood narrower.

But then, at last, the Sun came to see how sad Uletka was. And when he sent her a second time to fetch straw to bed down his golden horses, he crept into the barn after her. And there she was, sighing and lamenting.

'Eh, Uletka, what is the matter?'

And Uletka wept and said, 'I want to go home to my mother!'

The Sun said he would send her home. He called two foxes. Said he to the foxes, 'Will you take Uletka home to her mother?'

Said the foxes, 'Yes, why not?'

Said the Sun, 'And if you become hungry by the way, what will you eat?'

Said the foxes, 'We will eat Uletka.'

Said the Sun, 'I don't think you are suited for this affair.'

He sent the foxes away, and called two hares to him.

Said he to the hares, 'Will you take Uletka home to her mother?'

Said the hares, 'Yes, why not?'

Said the Sun, 'And if you should hunger and thirst by the way, what will you eat and drink?'

Said the hares, 'We will nibble the grass and drink the dew.'

Said the Sun, 'Take her, and carry her home.'

So the hares set out with Uletka, carrying her by turns on their backs. They skipped along merrily for many a mile,and then they felt hungry, and said, 'Little Uletka, climb up into this tree, and wait there until we have finished eating.'

Uletka climbed up into the tree, and the hares scampered away into a meadow to nibble the grass.

But no sooner were the hares out of sight than a witch passed under the tree. She looked up into the branches and saw Uletka. 'Ha! Here is my dinner!' said the witch to herself, and she called out:

'Uletka, Uletka, come down and see what beautiful shoes I have on!'

Uletka answered, 'Oh, my shoes are much finer than yours!'

The witch said, 'Come down! I am in a hurry, my house is not yet swept.'

Uletka answered, 'Go home and sweep it then, and come back when you are ready.'

The witch went away, swept her house, and came back with an axe. The hares were still nibbling the grass in the meadow. They didn't see the witch. And the witch stood under the tree, and called out:

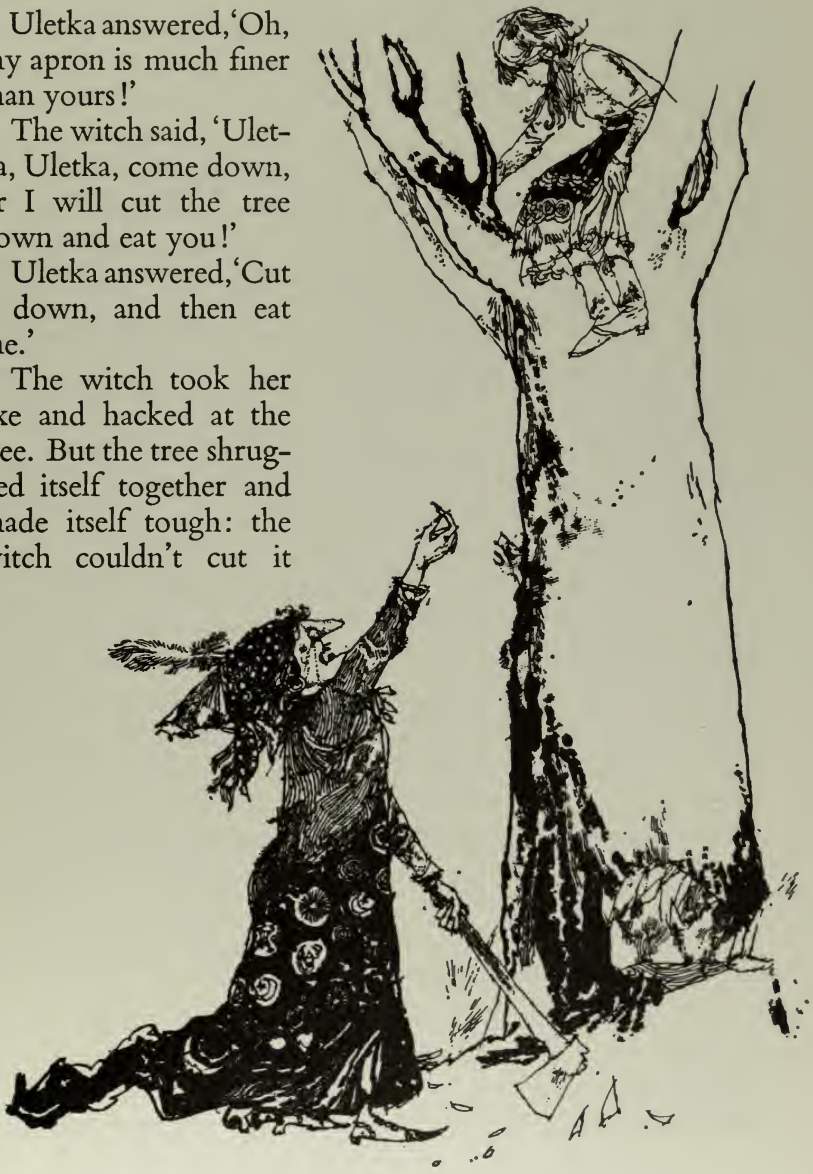
'Uletka, Uletka, come down and see what a beautiful apron I have on!'

Uletka answered, 'Oh, my apron is much finer than yours!'

The witch said, 'Uletka, Uletka, come down, or I will cut the tree down and eat you!'

Uletka answered, 'Cut it down, and then eat me.'

The witch took her axe and hacked at the tree. But the tree shrugged itself together and made itself tough: the witch couldn't cut it



down. So she threw away her axe and called out, 'Uletka, Uletka, come down, for I must feed my children.'

Uletka answered, 'Go home then and feed them; and come again when you are ready.'

The witch went away, and Uletka called out, 'Little hares! Little hares!'

Said one hare to the other hare, 'Listen! That is Uletka calling!'

And they both ran back to her as fast as they could.

Uletka scrambled down from the tree. 'Quick, quick, little hares! The witch is after me!'

The hares carried Uletka on their backs in turn, and they ran as they had never run before. But when the witch had fed her children and come back to the tree, and found Uletka gone, she set off in pursuit. And if the hares ran fast, the witch ran faster.

The hares were running across a field where people were digging. And Uletka called out, 'Don't tell anyone we have passed this way!'

The people said, 'We will not.'

The hares sped on; the witch sped on. Uletka looked over her shoulder and cried out, 'Little hares, little hares, the witch is catching us up!'

So then the hares doubled on their tracks, and went off another way, and the witch lost sight of them. She came to the field where the people were digging, and she called out, 'Have you seen anyone pass this way?'

The people answered, 'We are planting beans.'

Said the witch, 'A plague on your beans! I said, "Did anyone pass this way?" '

And the people answered, 'Are you deaf? It is beans, *beans*, BEANS we are planting!'

The witch sped on, and the hares sped on. The hares doubled back into the road that led to Uletka's home. Uletka's little dog was lying in the sun outside the house. He lifted his head and sniffed. '*Bow wow wow!* Uletka is coming!'

And the mother said, 'Hush, you beast of ill-omen! Do you want me to burst with misery?'

The hares sped on, and the witch sped on, they were nearing Uletka's home now. Uletka's cat was sitting on the roof, and he looked along the road, and called out, '*Miaouw, miaouw!* See, here comes Uletka!'

And the mother said, 'Keep silence, beast of ill-omen! Will you have me burst with misery?'

The hares sped on, and the witch sped on, and the witch was gaining on the hares. Uletka's cock flew up into a tree. He looked along the road and called out, '*Cock-a-doodle-doo!* Uletka *is* coming!'

And the mother said, 'Be quiet, you bird of ill-omen! Must my heart burst with misery?'

The hares sped on, the witch sped on, she was close behind them now. The hares reached the house door, the witch caught up with them: she made a grab at the tail of the hare that was carrying Uletka. But the hare gave a kick, and the tail came away in the witch's hand; the two hares scampered in through the door, and the mother slammed and bolted it.

There was the witch standing outside with the hare's tail in her hand. And after all her running, that was all she caught.

Uletka hugged her mother; the mother hugged Uletka. The mother said to the tail-less hare, 'Thank you, little hare! Because you have brought my Uletka safely home, I will make you a little tail of silver.' And she did; and the hare was very proud of its little silver tail.

The Sun didn't come for Uletka again: he didn't want to make her sad. So Uletka and her mother lived together happily ever after.

Dummling

Once upon a time there was a lad called Dummling. His father was the king's shepherd, and his two brothers worked in the fields, but Dummling did nothing but lie snug on the stove all day. Well, perhaps that was all he was fit for; but it vexed his father and angered his brothers; and only his mother was kind to him, and brought him his food when the others were out.

So one day his brothers come in from the fields, and there is Dummling as usual, neither sleeping nor waking, curled up snug on the stove. Bah! They can't stand it! They drag Dummling off the stove, shake him, bundle him into his coat and cap, thrust a basket into his hand, beat him to the door, and shout, 'Off with you to the forest and pick us some

mushrooms! There'll be no supper for you till you bring us a basketful!'

Poor Dummling! His wits are all rattled and confused by the shaking and beating his brothers have given him. He doesn't understand a thing; but he stumbles away to a small forest of oak-trees.

How pretty it was in the forest! All the trees were clothed in their new spring green. 'How happy they look!' thinks Dummling. Then he sees, standing solitary among the leafy trees, one dead dry stump. And he goes and stands by it.

Says he, 'I see each tree in this wood has a new green cap. Only you, my poor friend, are bare. You, among the others, are like me among my brothers. Without a doubt you were born a fool! And perhaps tonight it will freeze and the cold will kill you.'

And what does our Dummling do, but take the cap off his own head and put it on the stump.

And then he hugs the stump and weeps.

So when he mopped his eyes and looked up—oh, dear! He saw an oak-tree near by lift its roots and come walking towards him like a living being. Dummling is frightened: he turns to run away. But the oak-tree calls out, 'Stop! Stop! Listen! Listen! I have something to tell you!'

So Dummling stops running away, and the oak-tree says, 'This tree that was cut down before its time was my son. And up till now no one but myself has wept for his slaughtered youth. But now you weep, and have given him your own cap! And in return, everything you want you shall get from me. You have only to say:

Oak with golden acorns,
I beg you in the name of heaven,
To give me what I need!

And everything you need shall be yours. In the meantime, please accept this little present.'

And with that the oak-tree shook itself. And down fell a little heap of golden acorns at Dummling's feet.

So Dummling filled his pockets with the golden acorns, bowed to the oak and thanked it. And then he went home with the empty basket.

There were his brothers waiting for him.

'Imbecile! Where are the mushrooms?'

'I have oak mushrooms in my pockets,' says Dummling.

'Oak mushrooms! Oak mushrooms! Who ever heard of oak mushrooms? If that's all you've brought, you can have the oak mushrooms for your supper. You'll get nothing else! . . . And where's your cap?'

'I gave it to a poor tree stump. I was afraid he would freeze.'

'Hark to the fool! Will you never learn sense?' The brothers are so vexed that they take Dummling by the shoulders and shake him and shake him.

Hey, what's this? The golden acorns are tumbling out of Dummling's pockets like sunlight! The brothers snatch them up and run with them to their father, the king's shepherd.

'See what that fool has found in the forest!'

The shepherd says, 'I will take them to the king. He will reward us well.'

So off goes the shepherd with the golden acorns.

The king stares at them. His eyes glint. He is greedy. 'Where did you get these?'

'Dummling, my fool son, brought them from the forest.'

The king tossed a coin or two to the shepherd. The shepherd went home, none too well pleased. The king summoned his soldiers, bid them go to the forest, and find the oak with the golden acorns. The soldiers go to the forest, they search, they find nothing. They come back and tell the king.

'Well, if you can't find them, Dummling can!'

And the king sent a note to the shepherd: 'Before evening let Dummling bring me a barrelful of golden acorns. If he does so, I promise him my favour.'

And what says Dummling? Dummling says, 'I see the king

likes a good bargain. He doesn't ask and say please; no, he commands. And for a promise in the air, he tells the fool to bring him golden acorns! No, I won't go!'

Not he! He climbed back on to the stove. He wouldn't budge for anything.

But his brothers gripped hold of him, dragged him off the stove, hustled him into his coat, put a new cap on his head, pushed him into the yard, beat him, put him outside the gate, and locked it behind him.

'Neither bite nor sup will you get,' they shouted, 'till you come back with the golden acorns!'

Dummling goes to the forest. He is weeping. Look! There is the stump with his cap on it: there is the father oak. Dummling bows to the oak:

Oak with golden acorns,
Help me in my misery!
I beg you in the name of heaven
To give me what I need!

The oak stirred, the oak shuddered its branches. And dropped a napkin at Dummling's feet.

'Dummling, Dummling,' says the oak. 'Keep this napkin for yourself alone. You must not part with it. When you hunger, spread it upon the ground and say:

Nourishing napkin,
I beg you, in the name of heaven,
That he who has hunger and thirst
May find here all he needs.

'You need never go hungry whilst you keep that napkin, Dummling.'

So Dummling, having bowed and thanked the oak, took the napkin and set off for home again. He was thinking, 'Oh, won't Mother be pleased! Oh, won't Mother be pleased with

this nourishing napkin! She and I will feast together!' And though he was by this time very hungry, he decided not to spread out the napkin until he got home, that he might share with his mother whatever that napkin would provide.

But on the way there came an old beggar man hobbling towards him.

'I am old, I am sick, I am very, very hungry,' whines the beggar man. 'In the name of heaven, give me a halfpenny or a crust of bread.'

'Well,' thinks Dummling, 'I can do better than that!'

And he sat him down by the roadside, bade the beggar sit beside him, and then and there he spread out the napkin:

Nourishing napkin,
I beg you, in the name of heaven,
That he who has hunger and thirst
May find here all he needs!

Whew! There came a whistling in the air. And there came a shining: down through the air floated a table spread with gold and silver dishes. And in the dishes—what food! Dummling had never seen the like. 'Eat!' says he to the beggar. 'Eat! Eat!'

Soon both of them had their mouths full. They ate, ate, till they could eat no more.

And when they had done eating:

Whew! The air whistled, the gold and silver dishes rose, the table rose: away they floated, shining as they went.

Dummling folded up the napkin.

The old beggar said, 'Give me that napkin!'

'Nay!' says Dummling.

'But I will give you something precious in exchange,' said the beggar. And he took a rod from under his cloak. 'See this rod?'

'Yes, I see it.'

'Well,' says the beggar, 'you have only to say to it:

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Rod that beats all alone,
Run, run, run,
Beat whom I tell you!

'And will it? Oh ho, won't it! They'll have sore bones whom that rod beats!'

Then Dummling thought of his brothers. His back was still sore from the beatings they had given him. 'Ho! Ho!' thinks he. 'I should like to give them a taste of a rod like that!'

So he gave the beggar the napkin, the beggar gave him the rod, and they rose up and went their separate ways.

But Dummling hadn't gone very far, when he thought, 'Well now, what a fool I am! Didn't the oak-tree tell me I must keep that napkin for myself alone? And wasn't I going to give Mother a feast?' So he said to the rod:

Rod that beats all alone,
Run quickly to fetch my napkin!
Run, I want my napkin back!

And the rod jumped out of his hand and ran after the beggar.

The rod ran, the beggar ran, but the rod ran fastest. It was shouting at the top of its voice, 'Do the goods of others seem pleasant to you? Stop, rascal, stop!'

And it was just about to give that old beggar the beating of his life, when the beggar threw the napkin down. So the rod picked it up, and came hopping back, and gave it to Dummling.

'Thank you, my rod! That was well done, my rod!' says Dummling. And he walked on.

But he hadn't gone far when he met a traveller, carrying an empty knapsack.

Says the traveller, 'I have come a long way; I have a long way yet to go. See, my knapsack is empty! Can you spare me a crust of bread?'

'I can do better for you than that, my friend,' says Dummling. And down they both sit; Dummling spreads the napkin, and gives the traveller the best meal that ever he had.

So then, of course, the traveller wants the napkin. And he has something very precious he will give Dummling in exchange.

'See this belt?' says he. 'You have only to tap it and say:

Marvellous belt,
For my safety and pleasure,
Let me find myself
Floating on the water!

And the belt will turn itself into a big lake with a boat on it. And there you'll be, sitting in the boat.'

'Well,' says Dummling, 'I could fancy myself in a boat, out of everybody's way. And I know Father would like a lake to water the king's flocks.'

And he exchanged the napkin for the belt, buckled the belt round his waist, and walked on.

But he hadn't gone far when he thought, 'Fool that I am! Didn't the oak-tree tell me I must keep that napkin? And what about Mother's feast?' And he sent the rod after the traveller, and the rod soon came back with the napkin.

So on goes Dummling with his nourishing napkin, and his rod, and his marvellous belt; and he is nearing the end of the road that leads to home, when—well, I'm bothered!—if here isn't somebody else begging for a crust of bread! And that's a discharged soldier, dragging along all hot and dusty with his head bandaged up, and a six-cornered hat set on top of the bandage. Can Dummling refuse him a good meal? Of course he can't! So down they both sit. Dummling spreads the napkin, and gives that soldier such a meal as he's never had before, and is never like to have again.

But, oh dear me, the soldier's mouth is watering, and his

eyes are glinting. He must have that napkin, he *must*! So he takes off his six-cornered hat and says, 'See this hat?'

Says Dummling, 'Of course I see it. What then?'

'Well,' says the soldier, 'it's magic. It will shoot and kill from every one of its six corners. You have but to put it on your head, turn one of its corners in the direction you want to shoot, and say:

Hat which makes fire,
To soothe my wrath,
Strike what I point at.

And *bang! bang!* out whizz the cannon-balls, and down goes the enemy.'

Oh, how Dummling would like to have such a hat! 'With that hat on my head,' thinks he, 'I could defend myself, my king, or my country!'

And so—well there, he is but a simpleton when all's said and done—he hands over the napkin to the soldier, and gets the hat in exchange.

Off goes the soldier in one direction, off goes Dummling wearing the hat in the other direction. He can see his home now, over there beyond the fields. Smoke is rising from the chimney. His mother must be cooking supper. Beans and bacon? Bah! What was he going to give his mother? A feast; and that without her having to put her hand to the pan. And what was it the oak-tree said? 'Dummling, keep this napkin for yourself alone.'

Well then, Dummling must have that napkin back!

Rod that beats all alone,
Run quickly to fetch my napkin—
Run, I want my napkin back!

The rod runs, the soldier runs, but the rod runs faster. It is shouting at the top of its voice, 'Do the goods of others seem pleasant to you? Stop, rascal, till you get your beating!'

But the soldier didn't stop. He cast the napkin behind him and ran on.

And the rod picked up the napkin and came hopping back with it to Dummling.

So now here is our Dummling with napkin, rod, belt and hat, all complete, crossing the fields to home.

And look! Here are his brothers running out to meet him and shouting, 'Fool! Fool! Where are those golden acorns?'

'Ho! Ho! Ha, ha, ha!' Dummling is laughing fit to burst:

Rod that beats all alone,
Run, run, run,
Beat whom I tell you!

The rod jumps out of Dummling's hand. It runs at the brothers. *Whack! whack! whack!* first on one brother's back, then on the other brother's back. *Whack! whack! whack!* Is it never going to stop? Not till Dummling tells it to. And by that time the brothers are howling for mercy.

So come back rod! And you two brothers, off with you in a cloud of dust, and let's see no more of *you* for a bit!

And Dummling goes on into the cottage, tells his mother all his adventures; and spreads the napkin.

Ha! What a feast! And Dummling knows his mother richly deserves every good thing he can give her. For hasn't she always stood up for him when the rest were unkind? Hasn't she always fed him in secret with such homely fare as she had? So eat and enjoy yourself, dear little mother! Dummling loves you!

But now in comes Dummling's father, the king's shepherd, and that's different! But—oh well, let his father share the feast! Dummling is not one to bear grudges.

You may be sure Dummling's father was astonished. And when the feast was over and the napkin folded up, he said to himself, 'The king should know of this! For such a present the king would reward a man handsomely!'

But Dummling has climbed back onto the stove now, to rest after his adventures, and the napkin is safe in his pocket—no getting it from him! So off goes the shepherd, his father, to tell the king all about it.

The king wants the napkin, he wants it, and he means to have it. So he sends his chief minister with a message. The minister came back with the shepherd to the cottage. And there is Dummling, three parts asleep, lying on the stove.

Said the minister, 'Give me the napkin to carry to his majesty the king. And I promise you his majesty the king will be gracious. But if you don't give it—it will be the worse for you, my lad!'

Dummling sits up, yawns, rubs his eyes. 'Rod,' says he:

Rod that beats all alone,
Give blows to those who deserve them!

Up jumps the rod, down it comes on the minister's shoulders, *whack, whack, whack*, and shouting out:

Promises are children's toys.
Don't be too lavish with them!
To make you lose the taste of them
Take that! Take that!

The minister ran off howling, and the rod ran after him. But Dummling called it back.

So when the king heard about the rod, he said he must have it; and he sent a company of soldiers marching off with a sergeant at their head to get it. The sergeant found Dummling lying on the stove, and said, 'The king wishes to have your rod. He will pay for it anything in reason. But if you won't give it up, he bids us to take if from you by force.'

What did Dummling do? He tapped his belt. And says he,

Marvellous belt,
For my safety and my pleasure,
Let me now find myself
Floating on the water.

Then came a quivering in the air. The cottage vanishes; the fields vanish—and in their place appears a magnificent lake, large, deep, shining. Fish with golden scales and eyes of pearl are playing in the clear waters: and there, in the middle of the lake, is Dummling, rowing in a silver skiff.

The soldiers ran to tell the king. What can the king do? He wants that belt now. He *will* have it! But he bides his time and plots cunningly.

So when Dummling had tired of rowing in his silver skiff, he tapped the belt again and said, 'Marvellous belt, let us now

go home!' Then the lake disappeared: there were the fields again, and there the shepherd's cottage.

Dummling was strolling over the fields to home, when he looked round. What did he see? A whole regiment of soldiers marching to take him prisoner. What did he do? He turned the hat on his head and pointed a corner of it at the soldiers:

Hat which makes fire,
To calm my annoyance,
Strike those I point at.

Bang, bang, bang! A thousand cannon-balls whistled through the air. There weren't many soldiers left when that hat had done firing. A few escaped and fled to the forest; one escaped and ran to tell the king.

The king raged. Now he wanted napkin, rod, belt and hat; but especially the hat. How to get them? If force won't get them—well, then he must try guile. So he sent a message to Dummling's mother: 'Tell your son that I, the king, and my daughter, the princess, salute him. We do not order, but we *beg* that we may be given the napkin, and the rod, and the belt, and the hat. And in exchange we will bestow upon your son, Dummling, the princess's hand and half the kingdom. He shall be prince Dummling, the king's heir.'

Dummling's mother, all excited, went to Dummling. He was asleep on the stove. 'Wake up, my son, wake up!' cried she. 'Here is splendid news!'

And she told him.

And Dummling yawned and said, 'I don't know that I want to marry the princess. I don't know that I want half the kingdom. I don't know that I want to be prince Dummling, the king's heir.'

But Dummling's mother knew how to get round him. She said, 'Oh my dear son, life is very hard. I toil and moil all the day long. Would you have me toil and moil myself into the grave? If you were prince Dummling wouldn't your mother

be able to fold her hands now and again? And when you were king Dummling, think, only think—wouldn't the king's mother live in peace and luxury?'

Well, that settles it! Dummling takes napkin, rod, belt and hat, and off with him to the palace. There was music to greet him, there were troops to salute him, the chief minister stood waiting to receive him. He was led in state to where the king sat on his throne, with the princess standing beside him.

Dummling takes off his hat, bows low. 'Let it be as you wish, my lord the king! I come to lay at your feet the napkin, the rod, the belt, and the hat.'

And down he plumps all these things on the carpet before the throne.

Poor foolish Dummling! The king gives a nod; the minister sidles to the door and beckons. The guards rush in. They seize Dummling. The princess cries out, 'No! No! No!' But nobody listens to her. The guards drag Dummling out into the court, they kill him there and then, they bury him under a mound of earth outside the princess's window.

Oh, shame! shame! shame! The princess is horrified. 'Dear Dummling, I would have saved you if I could!' She goes out and looks at Dummling's grave; she weeps and her tears fall on the mound where Dummling is buried. She goes away and shuts herself up in her room. She is still weeping.

And lo, out of the earth where her tears have fallen there springs up an apple-tree. The apple-tree grows fast, fast, fast. It grows till its branches touch the window of the princess's room. In the morning it put forth buds, at noon the buds were blossoms, in the evening the blossoms were rosy apples.

The sun set, night came, the stars shone: everyone in the palace slept except the princess. She is lying awake, thinking of Dummling. Then what did she hear? A tapping at the window.

The princess goes to the window and opens it: the apples are gleaming in the starlight, and one of them is quivering on its stalk. It was that one that tapped at the window. The

princess touched the apple and it came off its stalk and lay in her hand. She carries it into the room. 'Poor, poor Dummling!' Her tears fall on the apple, the apple drops from her hand onto the floor, and where it falls—oh! oh! oh! up springs a handsome lad! The lad is laughing. He takes the princess in his arms, kisses her tears away.

'But who *are* you?'

'I am Dummling!'

Yes, it *is* Dummling, more wide awake than he has ever been, and twice as handsome! How they laugh, how they chatter, how they plight their troth! Everything is coming right for them. See! The door bursts open and helter-skelter in run the napkin, the rod, the belt, the hat. The napkin folds itself up and tucks itself into Dummling's pocket; the rod jumps into his hand; the belt buckles itself round his waist; the hat takes a leap and perches on Dummling's head. The magic gifts are back where they belong.

But the king, waking and finding his treasures gone, came running after them in his nightshirt. 'Guards, guards, guards! Seize the rascal! Bind him! Off with his head! Off with his head a thousand times, if once is not enough!'

But Dummling laughs. No one can harm him now! He taps his belt:

Marvellous belt,
For our safety and pleasure,
Let us now find ourselves,
My true love and I,
Afloat on the water!

Then comes a quivering in the air: courtyard, gardens, fields, everything outside the castle, vanishes. The castle is surrounded by a huge lake, magnificent, deep, shining. Fish with golden scales and eyes of pearl play in the clear waters. And far, far out on those clear waters, Dummling and the princess are sailing in a silver skiff.

What could be done with such a fellow? You kill him and

he comes to life; you try to catch him again, he slips away from you out of the turmoil into quiet waters. He may be a simpleton, but his kind heart has won him magic gifts. The princess loves him: the king owns himself beaten. He will make Dummling his heir, and the princess shall marry him. All this he shouts, leaning out of the castle window, and his words go echoing over the shining water.

So Dummling sailed his silver skiff to the castle walls. He tapped his belt, the air quivered, the lake vanished. And Dummling and the princess came back into the castle.

After that, all went merrily. Dummling married the princess, and in course of time he became king. He governed well. Perhaps after all he was not so simple as he seemed? Perhaps his love for the princess, and hers for him, had made him wise? But simpleton or no, he made a better king than the old one.

He had a good heart, you see.

The Glass Man and the Golden Bird

It was the good king Andrew whose subjects came to him and said, 'Take a wife, oh king, that your people may rejoice in an heir to the throne.'

The good king Andrew answered, 'I will take a wife.'

And he called a seer to him and said, 'Where shall I find the maiden whom I must marry?'

The seer gave the king a sprig of rosemary: 'The maiden to whom this sprig bows down will be the right maiden.'

So king Andrew summoned one hundred noble maidens and seated them at a long table. In front of each maiden was a little heap of pearls, and behind each maiden stood a page. The pages wrote the names of the maidens in pearls upon the table. And the king walked slowly past each maiden with the sprig of rosemary in his hand.

But the rosemary didn't bow down to any one. So the king thanked the maidens and sent them home, each with her gift of pearls.

Next day: another hundred noble maidens at the table, pearls before them, pages at their backs. The king passes along behind them. The rosemary does not bow. The maidens take their pearls and go home.

The third day: yet another hundred maidens. Now surely the king will find his bride!

Ah, no! The maidens sit at the table, the king with his sprig of rosemary passes behind them. The rosemary does not bow.

What can the king do? Is the rosemary making a fool of him? He goes to his bedchamber, opens the window, sets the sprig of rosemary in a jar of water on the sill, and sits there thinking.

And in through the window flies a little golden bird and perches on the rosemary.

'King, my king, don't you remember me?'

'No, my little bird.'

'Ah, but I remember *you*! Once when you were out hunting, a falcon pursued me, and you saved me from its talons. Now here I come to pay my debt of gratitude. I can bring you to the maiden who must be your wife. She lives in the Kingdom of Magic. At dawn, if you will take the road, I will show you the way.'

'I will take the road at dawn, little bird.'

So at dawn the good king Andrew made ready for his journey. The little golden bird waited hovering in the courtyard. The king mounted his horse, the little bird flew off, the sprig of rosemary jumped from the jar and floated through the air after the bird, and the king followed the rosemary.

On they journeyed, bird, rosemary and king. And as they were going through a lane, they met a beautiful white horse, limping and moaning.

The golden bird hovered over the limping horse, the rosemary floated above it. King Andrew drew rein: 'What ails you, my beautiful horse?'

And the white horse answered: 'In my shoulder is an arrow which I have carried for a whole year. An old witch stuck the arrow in my shoulder that I might not go to the rescue of my master, the Diamond King, whom she has enchanted because he would not marry her ugly daughter. I pray you, pull this arrow out, and I will carry you to my master to set him free.'

King Andrew dismounted and pulled the arrow out of the shoulder of the white horse. It was a magic glass arrow, and as soon as it was out, it shivered into dust. The white horse leaped high into the air with joy. Then he said to king Andrew's horse, 'Go home, brother, it is I who must carry the good king Andrew.'

So king Andrew's horse trotted back to his stable; king Andrew mounted the white horse, the little golden bird flew ahead, the rosemary floated after the bird, and king Andrew on the white horse followed the rosemary.

The king is off at a gallop, for the golden bird is flying fast, fast, fast, and the rosemary is whizzing through the air. Before them now rises a castle made of glass, and from the castle comes a terrible howling.

'In, in!' cries the white horse to king Andrew. 'In, and save my master!'

King Andrew jumps to the ground, he runs up the castle steps: the glass doors are wide open, and inside is a glass staircase going up and up. The howling gets louder and louder: King Andrew rushes up the glass staircase, and comes to a room where a huge glass man sits howling. The glass man writhes his body this way and that, and inside his body a gigantic hornet is buzzing and stinging. On a glass sofa lies a woman dressed in withered roses. A spider's web is wound round and round her, and at her side stands a little green woodpecker, darting her beak at the spider's web and pulling it to pieces.

'Who are you?' cried the glass man, as he writhed and howled. 'Why have you come here, and what do you want?'

'I am king Andrew, I seek the Kingdom of Magic. Who are you, and why do you howl?'

And the glass man answered, 'I am the Diamond King, lord of this castle. I howl because this hornet inside me will presently break me to pieces. I cannot be released as long as the witch, the hornet's mother, lives. She has turned herself into a monstrous spider, whose two front legs are two swords; and she turned me into this thing of glass, and her daughter into

the hornet. And all because I would not marry the wretched girl, but took a wife from the Kingdom of Magic. Look, there is my poor wife, lying on the sofa, with the rose dress that she brought from the Kingdom of Magic withered upon her. Every hour the spider-witch comes and binds her in a web, which the poor little woodpecker, who was her waiting-maid, vainly tries to pull to pieces. . . . Ah! Ah! The pain! The hornet! The pain! And hark! The witch is coming!'

Then comes a frightful clattering on the ceiling. And down from the ceiling on a black thread, swings a monstrous black spider. King Andrew draws his sword and rushes at the spider, but the spider has two swords, which are her two front legs—and what is one sword against two? King Andrew fights bravely, he leaps forward, leaps back; but he cannot get within striking distance of the spider, whose two swords, darting all ways swift as lightening, keep him at bay. The spider drives king Andrew into a corner. Ah, poor king, will she now catch him between those two terrible swords and make an end of him?

No. Listen! Help is coming! It is the white horse: he is pounding up the glass staircase, crashing it to splinters under his hoofs. Into the room he rushes, leaping and kicking. Now it is the spider-witch who is driven back: but still her two swords are whirling and slashing. Neither the white horse nor king Andrew can close with her: and inside the glass man the hornet is buzzing with rage, and stinging again and again. The hornet is up in the glass man's throat now, it is coming out to help the witch!

'Master, master, keep your mouth shut!' shrieks the white horse to the glass man. But the hornet stings the glass man's throat, the glass man opens his mouth in a howl, and out buzzes the hornet.

What a fight now! Round and round the room they whirl, the four of them: king Andrew and the spider-witch thrusting with their swords—two swords against one; the hornet darting here, there, everywhere, buzzing and stinging; the white horse leaping, bucking, kicking, biting. The glass room

clangs with the sound of the battle, the glass sofa (where the poor bound queen lies) rings and shivers; the little woodpecker flies up and darts her beak at the hornet, but even her sharp little beak cannot pierce the hornet's huge and scaly head. Is the battle never going to end?

The hornet and the spider-witch have driven the white horse against the wall. Ah! They will do for him now! But the white horse gives one tremendous leap, up like a rocket, down like a thunderbolt: down, down come his two front hoofs, one on the witch, the other on the hornet. And squash them both to pulp. They will never stir again. They are dead. The battle is over! And then—what a transformation! The glass man turns into a glittering king; the spider's web melts away from the woman on the sofa, and she rises up a smiling queen with roses blooming on her dress; the woodpecker turns into a lovely little waiting maid; the glass castle dissolves, and a diamond palace takes its place.

And the Diamond King turns to king Andrew, clasps his hands, thanks him again and again. 'You have delivered me and mine—what can I now do for you? Ask what you will: all that I have is yours.'

King Andrew says, 'I only ask for the loan of the white horse to carry me to the Kingdom of Magic.'

'A loan! Nay, a gift! The white horse is yours!'

But the white horse said, 'I do not change masters so easily. Though I will carry whom my master wills.'

The Diamond King laughs. 'Is that so, my good horse? Then be off with you now. Carry king Andrew to the Kingdom of Magic.'

King Andrew bids the Diamond King and his queen goodbye, and sets off: the little golden bird leads the way, the sprig of rosemary floats through the air after the bird, and king Andrew on the white horse follows the rosemary. And they come to the Kingdom of Magic sooner than soon.

But what a sad, sad kingdom! The people walk with bent heads, they mourn, they speak in whispers.

King Andrew asks them, 'What is the cause of your sorrow?' But they only shake their heads and bid him go seek their queen.

So king Andrew rode through streets hung with black, came to the queen's palace, was received there by silent servants, and brought to their queen.

The queen, old and frail, sat weeping on her throne. And king Andrew knelt before her.

'Madam, I would know the cause of your grief, that I may help you!'

'Alas, alas!' said the queen. 'I grieve for my two daughters, and no one can help me. I grieve for my elder daughter, the wife of the Diamond King, held captive by a wicked spider-witch. I grieve for my younger daughter also, whom sorrow has enchanted.'

Then king Andrew told the queen that the spider-witch was dead, the Diamond King restored to his proper shape, and his wife freed.

And half the queen's sorrow was lifted, and she rose up and embraced him.

'And your younger daughter,' said king Andrew, 'how fares it with her? Surely whatever the spell that binds her, it can be broken?'

But the queen said, 'She is beyond our help. In this Kingdom of Magic strange things happen. When my younger daughter heard of her sister's fate, Sorrow took her by the hand and led her away into the garden. Sorrow cast a spell over her; she shuddered and shrank together, she turned whiter than snow and sank to the ground. She neither sees, nor speaks, nor moves. Only her beauty remains to her. For Sorrow has changed her into a white lily. Come, I will show you.'

Then the queen led king Andrew into the garden. The golden bird flew over their heads, the rosemary glided through the air before them. And in a hidden corner, at the end of the garden, the white lily shone above its leaves, and filled the air with fragrance.

But what is the sprig of rosemary doing? It has floated down to earth, it stands before the white lily, it bows to the ground in front of her. . . . A white lily, just a white lily! Is this the bride king Andrew has come so far to seek? Surely it cannot be!

But the little golden bird perches on one of the lily's leaves and begins to sing. It sings its happy little song, telling the lily that the spider-witch is dead, that the Diamond King and his queen are disenchanted, that all is well. . . .The lily hears, the lily quivers, the lily rises from its bed, slender, white, laughing, lovely: no lily now, but a maiden fairer than fair. Yes, *this* is king Andrew's bride!

So then—what rejoicing in the Kingdom of Magic! The people threw off their mourning, they hung out banners, they strewed the streets with flowers. A magnificent wedding was held for king Andrew and his bride. And after the wedding, the lily princess bade good-bye to her happy mother, and set off with king Andrew on the white horse for king Andrew's kingdom. On the way they visited the Diamond King and his queen in the diamond palace, and there were more rejoicings.

And the white horse said to the Diamond King, 'I have done as you bid me, master, and now I have come back to you.'

'Yes, my good horse,' said the Diamond King. And he ordered out his diamond coach and eight prancing piebalds to carry king Andrew and his bride the rest of the way to king Andrew's kingdom. The little golden bird flew before the coach, and the rosemary floated over it. Good king Andrew and his lovely bride came safely home, to the great gladness of his people.

King Andrew planted the sprig of rosemary in the garden outside his window. It grew into a big bush, and on summer evenings the little golden bird came to perch on its top-most spray and sing.

What did it sing?

It sang the whole of this story.

The Fiddle

Somewhere, sometime, there was a gipsy who went wandering through the world with his fiddle.

The gipsy was poor, the gipsy was hungry, the gipsy was miserable. Said he to his fiddle:

'Oh my only friend, tell of my sorrows!'

And he drew his bow across the fiddle strings.

Then the fiddle began to tell of the gipsy's sorrows. How sad it sounded! The sun hid his face, the birds fell silent, even the grass blades were covered with tears. And a demon who lived in a willow-tree heard, and wept.

Thinks the demon, 'If I had that fiddle, I could draw all men to me, to weep or laugh as I chose!'

And what did that demon do but disguise himself as a countryman, and go to stand at the side of the road.

So there was the gipsy, coming along the road, playing his fiddle, telling of his sorrows, and making the world weep.

And the countryman-demon stepped out in front of him and said: 'Friend, you are sad?'

Says the gipsy, 'Sad, sad! How should I not be sad? I who have no hope in life!'

Says the countryman-demon, 'Friend, can I help you?'

Now the gipsy was no fool. He looked hard at that countryman. He saw the tips of two horns sticking out under the countryman's hat. So he said warily, 'How can the likes of *you* help me?'

Says the demon, 'Give me what is dearest to you, and I will make you rich.'

Says the gipsy, 'There is nothing dear to me except my fiddle.'

'Then give me your fiddle!'

'Ah, but what could I do without it?'

Says the demon, 'I will give you gold, so much gold that you need never want again.'

Says the gipsy, 'I should like to see that gold!'

Then the demon plucks two bulrushes out of the ditch by the roadside. He sits astride one bulrush, and bids the gipsy sit astride the other. The bulrushes turn into winged horses. Away fly the demon and the gipsy, and come to a shallow stream, brightly flowing. That stream might well flow brightly, for every pebble in the stream's bed was pure gold.

Says the demon to the gipsy, 'All this gold is yours in exchange for the fiddle.'

Says the gipsy, 'You shall have the fiddle. But first it shall play me a farewell tune.'

So the gipsy stood there by the stream and drew his bow across the fiddle strings. That was a heartrending farewell tune the fiddle played: the sky wept, the earth wept, the demon

wept. And as the last sobbing note of that tune died away, the gipsy kissed the fiddle and drew in a long, long breath.

'Take it!' says he, and hands the fiddle to the demon.

The demon took the fiddle and flew off. The gipsy jumped into the stream and filled his pockets with gold. He went on to the town and bought himself new clothes, went to an inn and had a good meal, took lodgings at the inn, and went back to the stream for more gold. He fetches more gold and more gold—no end to it! He buys a grand house, horses and

carriages, lives at ease. He is immensely rich. Hasn't he now everything his heart can desire?

Ah, no! Ah, no! He is longing for his fiddle! How can he live without his fiddle? He is now even more unhappy than he was when poor and hungry.

So one early evening, when he was moping in the garden, there comes a rush of wind, the leaves blow off the trees, the flowers strew their petals: and there before the gipsy stands the demon. The demon has the fiddle under his arm, his eyes glare, he is in a wicked temper! He slaps the fiddle and says, 'This thing is perverse! It won't play properly for me! I, who thought to bend all men to my will when I played—what do I find? When I draw the bow across the strings the fiddle screams, the fiddle groans! It makes such horrible noises that everyone is frightened and runs away!'

'What else can you expect?' says the gipsy. 'When I gave you my fiddle, I didn't give you my all. I kept just one thing for myself.'

'And what thing was that?' says the demon.

'My soul,' says the gipsy. 'Hand me that fiddle!'

The gipsy took the fiddle in his hands. He breathed a long, long breath into it. It was his soul he breathed into it. And then he began to play a joyful tune. He played on and on. He played so wonderfully that he even astonished himself by his playing. The whole world rejoiced: the setting sun laughed in the sky, the birds laughed on the trees; the wind laughed among the leaves, the flowers laughed at the gipsy's feet.

And the demon laughed and laughed.

'Ha! ha! ha!' laughed the demon; and he began to skip for joy. The demon skips, the demon laughs, 'Ha! ha! ha! Ha! ha! ha!'

The demon skips right out of the garden; he skips away out of sight; he is still laughing.

The gipsy tucked the fiddle under his arm and went back into the house. He is not unhappy any more. He has his fiddle again: he has now all that he needs both for soul and body.

Prince Mirko

It was the old White King, and he sat at his window, weeping. All day long he sat at his window, looking towards the east, and wept, wept.

And his three sons came to him and said, 'Father, why do you sit at your window and weep?'

The White King said, 'I weep for my brother, the King of the Silk Meadows. When we were young we fought side by side against our enemies. Now I am old and sit with folded hands. But the King of the Silk Meadows must still fight on, for his enemies are legion. When he has conquered them, he will come to me, that we may spend our last days together. Such was his promise. Till then, I watch for his coming, and weep.'

The sons said, 'Father, let one of us go to the meadows of silk and help your brother to overcome his enemies. And when his enemies are defeated we will bring your brother to you.'

The king said, 'Go, one of you. And God go with you!'

So the eldest son set out. He rode, rode, for a whole year, and he came to a copper bridge over a river. The bridge was broken in the middle: the horse won't cross. So the prince took a piece of the copper bridge and rode home to his father.

'Father, I did my best, but I came to a bridge there was no crossing.'

And he showed his father the broken bit of copper.

The king cried out, 'Call yourself a man! When I was your age I rode to that bridge in a day: but you take two years going and coming!'

So then the second son set out. He rode for a year and came to the copper bridge that was broken in the middle. His horse

is better than his brother's: that horse leaps the gap in the bridge, and the prince rode on for another year. Then he came to a silver bridge over a river. The silver bridge is broken, the river foams over it. The horse shies, snorts, runs backwards. Cross that bridge? Not he! So the prince turned and rode back to his father. He was four years going and coming.

'Father, I did my best. I crossed the copper bridge; but I came to a silver bridge there was no crossing. It was smashed to pieces and the river foamed over it. See!' And he showed the king a piece of the silver bridge he had picked up.

The king cried out, 'You are no better than your brother! When I was your age I reached that silver bridge in two days. But you take four years going and coming!'

And he looked out of the window towards the east, and the tears ran down his cheeks.

So the youngest son, whose name was Mirko, said, 'Father, now *I* will go!'

And the king answered, 'Go, go, by all means! If you can't do better than your brothers, you can't at least do worse!'

Prince Mirko went to the stables for a horse. And at the stable door stood an old woman.

Says the old woman, 'These horses are no good. Fetch your father's big hunting horn. Go out into the fields and blow a loud blast. Then there will come to you the herd of horses that have skins of gold. And behind them will trail their mother—the old lame mare. She, and only she, can carry you to the Meadows of Silk.'

The prince did that. He fetched the hunting horn and went into the fields. He blew a loud blast, and there came galloping such a herd of horses as the eye has never seen, with coats of gold that blazed like the sun itself. And behind them comes limping an old grey mare.

And the mare up and spoke. 'Prince Mirko, I know where you want to go, and I will take you. But feed me first.'

The prince said, 'What food shall I bring you?'

The mare said, 'A sack of barley.'

The prince fetched the barley; the mare ate it up. Her coat began to shine a little.

Said she, 'Now a sack of millet.'

The prince fetched the millet; the mare ate it up. Her stumpy mane and tail began to grow a little.

Said she, 'Now a shovel full of hot embers.'

'Oh no, my mare, the embers will burn you!'

The mare stamps her foot. 'Do as you're told!'

The prince fetched the embers; the mare swallowed them. What is she now? A tremendous, white-shining fleet-footed steed, with mane and tail like moon-lit water, and silver shoes with diamond nails.

'Oh—oh—oh, my mare!'

'Am I worthy to carry you, Prince Mirko?'

'You are worthy to carry the Lord of Heaven, my mare!'

'Then go to your father, where he sits weeping. Ask for the sword, the bridle, and saddle that he used when he rode to the wars, fifty years ago.'

Prince Mirko went to his father and asked for those things. The king wept and said, 'Oh me! Oh me! All rusty! All worm-eaten! All rotten!'

Said Mirko, 'Yet tell me where they are.'

Said the king, 'In some corner of the cellar.'

Mirko rummages in the cellar. He finds the sword, the bridle and the saddle. What had been metal is red rust; what had been leather comes to pieces in his hands; what had been stuff, the moth-worms have eaten. But Mirko gathers it all up in a sack, and carries the sack to the mare.

'Lay the sack at my feet, Mirko.'

Mirko laid the sack at the mare's feet. The mare stooped her head over it; snuffed in her breath, snuffed it out.

'Open the sack, Mirko.'

Mirko opened the sack. See! Sword, saddle, and bridle new and shining as when the king first used them.

'Gird on the sword, Mirko. Saddle me, bridle me, and up on my back!'

Mirko did that, and the mare said, 'How shall I carry you, Mirko: with the speed of tempest, or with the quickness of thought?'

'Carry me as you will, my mare, only so manage that I don't fall off.'

'Good! Shut your eyes lest you turn giddy.'

Mirko shut his eyes: the mare was away like a shot arrow. In a few minutes she struck the ground with her silver shod hoof. 'Open your eyes, Mirko. What do you see?'

'I see a wide river and a bridge of copper broken in the middle.'

'Good!' said the mare. 'This is where your eldest brother turned back.'

'But can we cross that bridge?'

'We can, if you are not afraid.'

'I am not afraid, my mare.'

'Good, shut your eyes.'

Mirko shut his eyes, the mare sped on like the very whirlwind. In a few minutes she stamped on the ground, stood still, and said, 'Open your eyes. What do you see?'

'I see a silver bridge smashed to pieces, and a mighty river foaming over it.'

'Good! This is where your middle brother turned back.'

'Must *we* turn back, my mare?'

'Are you afraid, Mirko?'

'I am not afraid, my mare.'

'Good, shut your eyes.'

Mirko shut his eyes; the mare sped on faster than thought. In a few minutes she stamped and said, 'Open your eyes, Mirko. What do you see?'

'I see a river wide as ocean, and a golden bridge spanning it. The golden bridge is not broken, but twelve fierce lions guard it, six at either end. Oh, my mare, must we cross that bridge?'

'Unless you are afraid, Mirko?'

'I am not afraid, my mare.'

'Good! Shut your eyes.'

Mirko shut his eyes. The mare sped on. In a few minutes she stamped again. 'Open your eyes, Mirko. Look down. What do you see below us?'

'I see far beneath us something round and black, like a black plate.'

'Good! That is the earth. What do you see ahead of us?'

'I see a narrow, narrow glass path that sways in the wind, with nothingness on either side of it.'

'Good!' said the mare. 'That is our road.'

'Oh, my mare, my mare! Glass is brittle and slippery! The darkness of nothingness is deep and terrible!'

'Are you afraid, Mirko?'

'Yes, now I am afraid.'

'Shall we turn back, Mirko?'

'No, my mare.'

'Good! Shut your eyes. I shall not slip, for I have on my feet the silver shoes that your father fastened to them fifty years ago, and the diamond nails he hammered into them.'

Mirko shuts his eyes. He clings to the mare's mane, and trembles. The mare speeds on. In a few minutes she stamps and says, 'Open your eyes. What do you see?'

'Only thick darkness.'

'Good! We go through that darkness. Shut your eyes.'

She sped on, stamped and said, 'Open your eyes, Mirko. What do you see now?'

'I see a glorious light. I see snow mountains shining in that light. I see under the mountains a silken meadow, and in the midst of the meadow, something black.'

'Good! No need now to shut your eyes. This is the country of the King of the Silk Meadows. And that dark object is his tent, woven of black silk.'

The mare lifts her head, gives a low whinny. And from across the silken meadow a big black stallion comes trotting.

'Hail, brother!'

'Hail, sister!'

They are nibbling each other's necks, the mare and the stallion.

'This is my brother,' says the mare. 'He and I galloped side by side fifty years ago, when the two brother kings charged into battle together. Get off my back, Mirko, go to the black tent yonder and find your father's brother. The black stallion and I have much to tell each other.'

Mirko gets off the mare's back and walks across the silken meadow to the black tent. He stands at the entrance to the tent and looks in. The King of the Silk Meadows is lying asleep in there; and above his head hangs a sword that turns continually, slashing the air on all sides. Shall Mirko wake the king? No, he thinks not. He hangs his own sword at the entrance of the tent and lies down under it. And Mirko's sword, too, begins to turn continually, slashing the air on all sides.

Mirko sleeps; he is worn out. The King of the Silk Meadows wakes, sees Mirko, leaps up, shouts:

'Hey, hey, hey! What man are you? And what do you here, where none come but my enemies?'

Mirko wakes. 'I am no enemy. I am Mirko, son of your brother, the White King. I am come to fight for you and bring you to my father.'

The King of the Silk Meadows embraces him, and leads him into the tent.

'Mirko, my lad,' says he. 'I will tell you how it is. Every day this great silken meadow is filled with my enemies. Each day I cut them down, but every morrow comes another horde. That is my life: to fight, to sleep a little, and fight again. I am weary of it, but what can I do? But come, let us eat and drink whilst we may.'

They had scarce done eating, when hundreds of enemy soldiers came rushing across the meadow. They burst into the tent, they set upon Mirko and the Silk King. But Mirko and

the king, with their swords that turn all ways, hack, hew, kill. They kill all of the enemy but twelve, and these twelve turn and flee for their lives.

Mirko and the Silk King are after them; but Mirko, fleeter of foot, leaves the Silk King far behind. He is almost up with the enemy when there rises a black fog out of the earth. And when that fog clears, the enemy are gone.

But see—a little hole in the ground! That way the enemy must have gone, and that way Mirko will follow. He squeezes through the hole: he goes down, down, down, and comes into the Other World.

Yes, look—the enemy, all twelve of them, fleeing across a plain towards a diamond castle. Mirko flings his sword after them. Ho! Ho! They can't escape that sword, run as they will. It catches them up, it turns in the air, this way, that way: *snip! snap!* The sword cuts off their twelve heads and comes back into Mirko's hand.

And Mirko walked on, and into the diamond castle.

He went through one room, he went through another room, and came to a place where an old hag was working at a loom. Each time she threw her shuttle to the right, two hussars on horseback came out of the loom. Each time she threw her shuttle to the left, two foot-soldiers came out. Mirko stood at the side of the loom, waving his sword, and as each soldier came out he cut off their heads. No good at all! As many as he killed, as many more came out.

So then Mirko waves his sword and cuts off the old hag's head.

Plague take the old creature! She goes on working without a head! And the soldiers go on coming out of the loom as fast as Mirko cuts them down. So then Mirko, in his rage, seizes up the old hag and the loom and runs with them into the courtyard: he cuts the old hag into a thousand pieces, takes out his tinder box, sets fire to the loom, sets fire to the old hag. There they are now, blazing merrily. The flames roar up, the flames die down. That's the end of you, old woman!

Ho! Is it? See, there in the hot ashes a little bone is turning and twisting. The bone spins round faster and faster, it grows bigger and bigger, it has arms and legs now, and a head. Look, there is the old hag again, with her head nodding on her body, and her mouth agrin.

'You can't kill me, Mirko, hack and hew as you will. I live from age to age. But now that you've burned my loom, I can't make any more soldiers. So the King of the Silk Meadows is safe from me. Put your sword in its scabbard, brave lad; wait here a moment and I'll bring you a present, and send you back quickly the way you have come.'

Then the old thing hobbled into the castle, and came out again carrying fourteen diamond horse-shoe nails and a huge pair of bellows. She thrusts the diamond nails into Mirko's hands; and then with the bellows—*huff! puff!* she blows Mirko clean out of her world. Here he is now walking across the silken meadow towards the black tent, and the Silk King is hastening to meet him.

Said the King, 'I thought you had left me forever!'

Said Mirko, 'All your enemies are dead, and the loom is burnt and can make no more soldiers. So come with me now to my father's kingdom, that he may rejoice in you and cease to weep.'

But the Silk King said, 'Dear lad, I cannot come. The diamond nails on my stallion's shoes are worn out years ago. He will slip on the glass path and plunge us both into nothingness.'

Mirko laughed and opened his hands. 'See, I have diamond nails to shoe your stallion. Call him here!'

So the Silk King called the stallion; and Mirko took off the stallion's shoes, and shod him again, driving in the diamond nails. And away they went, Mirko on the mare, the Silk King on the stallion, travelling fast as thought, and passing all dangerous places with their eyes shut, trusting to their brave steeds. And in no time at all—there they are, back in the White King's kingdom.

The White King sits at his window, looking towards the east, and weeping. He sees two shining steeds, a white and a black, galloping towards the palace. He sees two riders—who can they be? Surely one is his son, Mirko—but who is the other? Dare he trust his tear-filled eyes? Yes, he dares and will! It is his brother—his brother the King of the Silk Meadows! The White King jumps up, he runs out of the palace, he is laughing, laughing, laughing!

The King of the Silk Meadows leaps from the stallion's back. The two kings are in each other's arms.

'My brother!'

'My brother!'

Who can tell of their joy? They go in to feast together, and talk of old times.

Mirko thought to stable the white mare. But she said to him, 'Let those rest whose work is done. You and I have yet one more task.'

'What task is that, my mare?'

'To fight a monster who is called Doghead; to free a princess—the Princess of Excellent Beauty—and thereby win you a wife, my prince.'

'Well, then, my mare, let us set about it.'

'Up on my back, Mirko, and shut your eyes.'

Mirko gets up on the white mare's back, shuts his eyes. Now they are rushing, rushing, they leave the whirlwind behind. The mare stamps her foot. 'Open your eyes, prince Mirko. What do you see?'

'I see a seven-storied diamond palace that dazzles my eyes.'

'Leave me here. Go in. Doghead lives there.'

Mirko goes in. Doghead is not at home; but the Princess of Excellent Beauty sits embroidering at a window.

'Who are you?'

'I am Prince Mirko, come to set you free.'

'Alas, alas! Doghead is mightier than the mighty!'

'Yet I am Prince Mirko, come to set you free.'

'Then come with me, for there is but one chance.'

The Princess of Excellent Beauty took a silver flask, and led Mirko to an unsealed cask that stood in the courtyard. Said she, 'In this cask is the water-that-gives-strength. Fill the flask with that water, and hang it about your neck. When your strength begins to fail, dip your little finger into the flask and your strength will be increased with the strength of ten thousand men.'

Mirko filled the flask, and the princess said, 'Now drain the rest of the water out of the cask, lest Doghead draw of it also.'

Said Mirko, 'Nay, I would fight fair!'

Said the princess, 'Then Doghead will kill you, and none can rescue me.'

Said Mirko, 'Yet I will not drain that cask.'

Said the princess, 'Then go to the gates, you stubborn, and look to the setting sun for Doghead's coming.'

Mirko went to the gates, and looked over a wide plain towards the setting sun. What did the princess do behind his back? She drew the bung from the cask, and let the water-that-gives-strength flow out on to the ground. She let it flow out to the last drop. And she took sand, and covered the spilled water with sand, and more sand, till all was dry.

Then from the Land of the Setting Sun the monster Doghead came rushing: huge, shag-headed, terrible. When he saw Mirko he flung his sword from afar: the sword comes whirling over Mirko's head; Mirko slashes at it with his own sword that turns all ways; the two swords fight each other in the air above Mirko's head, the air rattles with their blows, and sparks fly so thickly that the earth takes fire.

Doghead roared: he came rushing upon Mirko, seized him round the body, lifted him off his feet, and plunged him down again with a force that drove him into the ground up to his girdle. Mirko is scared: 'Is this to be the end of me?' Then he remembers the flask that hangs round his neck; he thrusts his little finger into the flask, and such strength flows through

him that he leaps clean out of the earth, and flings himself on Doghead. Doghead looks round for the cask of the water-that-gives-strength. 'Ah wicked princess, you have betrayed me, the cask is empty!' Doghead howls, Mirko has him in a grip from which there is no escape. Mirko lifts Doghead high into the air, he thrusts him down again on to the earth, he presses him down, down, down. Down into the earth go Doghead's legs, down into the earth goes his great body, down into the earth goes his shaggy head. There is nothing to be seen of Doghead now, but one tuft of hair.

And Mirko stamps his foot upon the tuft of hair; and stamps the earth over it.

Then he turns to the princess. 'Princess of Excellent Beauty, are you willing to become my wife?'

'Yes, Mirko, I am more than willing,'

'Then I will lift you on to my mare and we will be off to my father's kingdom.'

'What, Mirko, and leave this seven-storied diamond palace behind?'

'Since we can do no other, princess.'

'Is there any palace so fine in your father's kingdom, Mirko?'

'There is no palace so fine in all the world, my princess.'

'Then we will take it with us, Mirko.'

The Princess of Excellent Beauty fetched a diamond rod, and began walking round the palace, striking it with the rod on all sides. The palace began to shrink together; it grew smaller and smaller, until it was no bigger than a sentry-box. Then the princess stepped into it; but she left the diamond rod lying on the ground. The palace shrank again: it turned into a golden apple, and inside the apple the princess was laughing.

'Pick me up, Mirko, and carry me home!'

Mirko picked up the golden apple and the diamond rod, jumped on the white mare, and shut his eyes. The white mare had him home in a flash.

The two old kings were still feasting and talking of old times. Mirko took them each by a hand.

'Come with me!'

He led them out through the gardens into a beautiful spacious meadow. He set the golden apple down in the middle of that beautiful spacious meadow, and struck the apple on all sides with the diamond rod. The apple swelled and swelled; now it was as big as a sentry-box; now as big as a house. And still, as Mirko struck it on all sides with the diamond rod, it grew bigger and bigger, till there it was, a diamond palace, seven stories high, and dazzling the eyes.

And at the palace door, to welcome them in, stood the Princess of Excellent Beauty.

So then—what more? Mirko married the princess, and his father, the White King, said, 'The kingdom is yours, my son. I would willingly rest.'

So Mirko took over the kingdom. And the two old kings, the White King and the King of the Silk Meadows, sat in the window that looked to the east, and rejoiced, talking over old times.

The Fairy Helena

There was a lad called John, who went to be a soldier. And one night they put him to stand guard outside a prison.

So there is our John, standing in the moonlight with his gun over his shoulder, and the keys of the prison in his pocket. Not a sound did he hear until midnight; and then there came such a moaning and a groaning from inside the prison as made John's hair stand on end.

'Let me out! Let me out! Let me out!' moaned a voice.

'I can't do that!' shouts John. And he takes a turn or two up and down in front of the prison gates, hoping the voice would stop. But when he came to a stand, there it was still moaning and groaning, 'Let me out! Let me out!'

Now John was a tender-hearted lad; and when whoever it was inside began to sob, John couldn't stand it; and what did he do but take the big keys from his pocket and unlock the gates.

Whooh-hooh! Crick-crack! Something rushed up past him in a sparkle of fire and a cloud of smoke. And when the smoke cleared, there was a demon grinning down at him from the roof of the prison.

'Hey! Come back!' shouts John.

'Not I!' shouts the demon. And off he flew, away over the roof tops with sparkles of fire and puffs of smoke belching out from behind him.

'Oh, Lord!' thinks John. 'Fool that I am, what have I done? I best be off, or I'll be shot in the morning for this night's work!'

And he locked up the gates again, flung down the keys, pitched his gun after them, and away with him out of the town.

He ran and he walked, and he ran and he walked till

morning, and by that time he had put a goodish bit of ground between him and the town. But not so much ground but that he feared he might still be chased after and caught. So on he went all that day and all the next day, without a bite or a sup, or a rest for his feet; till, on the third day, he came to a barren waste, and there he flopped down under a bush of thorn, for he couldn't go a step farther.

And now he was crying and moaning and thinking he must die, and calling that demon all the bad names under the sun.

Whooh-hooh! Crick-crack! Came a shower of sparks and a puff of smoke, and there was the demon.

Says the demon, 'What's fretting you, John?'

'What's fretting me, indeed!' cries John. 'It's yourself is doing that! There was I in a snug job, with food to put in my mouth, and a penny to put in my pocket, and now see! Here I must die by the roadside, and all because of you!'

'No, you mustn't die, John,' says the demon. 'Are you hungry?'

'*Hungry!*' says John. 'I'm that empty I could eat the universe!'

'Well then, eat,' says the demon. He snapped his fingers, and down out of nowhere bounced a table spread with everything good to eat and drink.

John ate till he was full. And then the demon said, 'You'll never regret having done me a good turn, John.' And he lifted John in his arms, and away up into the air with him.

'Stop, stop!' cries John. 'I don't like this! Where are you taking me?'

'To my palace,' says the demon. And he flew and flew over thrice nine realms till he came to a white palace, and there he dropped down and set John on his feet. He took John by the hand and led him inside. They went through a lot of rooms, and came to a hall where ten merry girls were playing at blind man's buff.

'I'd have you know these are my daughters, John,' says the

demon. 'So you can get acquainted and enjoy yourselves, whilst I go off again on a little bit of business.'

So then the demon went, and the girls came round John, laughing and petting him. If they'd been angels from heaven they couldn't have made John more welcome. So he lived in that palace for a week of days, or longer. He had fine food, and a fine bed, and fine fun with the girls.

But every evening at supper time those girls would suddenly go from the table and run upstairs; and John didn't get another sight of them till next morning.

John didn't like that; he wanted to sing a bit, and play a bit, and have some more fun before he went to bed. So one evening he went upstairs, knocked at their room door, and called them. But he got no answer.

Next morning he said, 'Why do you go to bed so early?'

But they wouldn't tell him: they only laughed.

So when this has been going on for some time, John thinks, 'There's a mystery here! Those girls aren't sleepy; they get brighter and brighter as the day wears on. I'll lay my life they don't go to bed! They're up to something!'

So what does he do but tiptoe upstairs and put his eye to the keyhole of the girls' room.

He got a surprise, I can tell you! Those girls were unrolling a strip of carpet, and when it was unrolled they all went to stand on it. Then they gave a stamp of their feet, turned into pigeons, and flew out of the window.

John pulled the door open and ran into the room. He stood on the carpet, gave a stamp with his foot, turned into a sparrow, and flew off after the pigeons.

He flew after them till they came to alight in a green meadow, that had a green throne in the middle of it. And then he lighted down too, went to perch hidden in the hedge, and watched what would happen next.

And it wasn't long before the air was thick with white pigeons. They were flying in from all directions and lighting down in the meadow like snow falling; and soon the

meadow was covered with them, except for the green throne. They were all looking up into the sky, and John looked up too, and saw a green chariot drawn by bright snakes coming down as if out of heaven. In the chariot sat a woman more beautiful than John had ever thought a woman could be; and she took her seat on the green throne, and all the pigeons bowed their heads till their beaks touched the ground.

'Welcome, fair birds,' said she; and she began to talk to them. It seemed she was teaching them something, but what it was John couldn't have said, for her voice was like music, and it flowed through John's brain in such sweet sounds that he lost all sense of what she was saying in the joy of her voice. And when she had done speaking she stepped into her chariot again, and was carried up into the air: and all the pigeons spread their wings and flew away.

John fluttered out of the bush and flew after the ten pigeons that were the demon's daughters. When they came to the demon's palace they flew in through the window, stamped on the carpet and turned into maidens again. So what does sparrow John do but fly in after them, stamp on the carpet, and turn into John again.

'Oh John, John!' cried the maidens. 'What have you been doing?'

'Looking on my heart's desire and listening to her music,' says John.

'But do you know who she is?'

'Not I,' says John. 'But I know I love her with all my soul.'

They told him that she was the Fairy Helena, the most powerful fairy in all the universe. 'And if you spy on her, John, you'll rue it!'

But John said see her again he must and would.

So next evening the girls bolted the door of their room to stop John from following them. But he broke down the door, and after them in the shape of a sparrow.

All happened as it had happened the night before. But when the Fairy Helena had done speaking and stepped back

into her chariot, and the pigeons flew away, sparrow John didn't fly after them. He spread his little wings and flew up after the chariot.

Up and up and up, far above the clouds, till they came to a palace that shone like the sun itself. The Fairy Helena stepped out of her chariot and went into the palace, and sparrow John went to perch in a tree in the garden. And so great was his love that it flowed from him in song, and he sang and sang like any nightingale.

Then Fairy Helena said to her waiting maids, 'There's a strange bird in the garden. Go and catch it.'

The waiting maids went out; they coaxed sparrow John with sugar and cake, but sparrow John wasn't to be caught. So then the Fairy Helena came out herself and held up her finger. And sparrow John flew down and perched on her finger, and she carried him into her room and set him on the rail of the bed.

'For you sing very sweetly, my bird,' said she. 'So now you can sing me to sleep.'

So sparrow John sang, and Fairy Helena fell asleep. And when she slept he turned into a man and stooped over her and kissed her.

The Fairy Helena wakes. 'Who kissed me?'

But John is a sparrow again, and perches on the bedrail.

The Fairy Helena sleeps; John becomes a man; he stoops over her and kisses her.

The Fairy Helena wakes. 'What man kissed me?'

No man! There is the sparrow perched on the bedrail.

The Fairy Helena sleeps. She is kissed yet a third time. She wakes, leaps out of bed, looks round her. No man to be seen, only the sparrow! But she will get to the bottom of this mystery. She opens her magic book, turns the leaves, reads. There it is on one leaf, all written down. She snatches up the sparrow and gives him a slap.

'Become your true shape!'

Poor John, there he stands, trembling and ashamed. What

will she do with him? She will cut off his head! She sends for the executioner.

Was that to be the end of our John? He fell on his knees, he bowed his head, he kissed the hem of her robe. Yes, he would die, if that was her will, only he besought her to let him first sing one more song, sing of his love for her, of his love that was greater than the love felt by any man before since the world began.

Said she, 'You may sing.'

So John began to sing. And if the song of the sparrow had pleased the Fairy Helena, the song of the man pleased her even more. It touched her heart, it brought tears to her eyes. How could she kill this love? But he had sinned against her, he had thrust himself into her sacred presence—must he not die?

So she ponders and hesitates, and at last she says: 'Yes, you sing well, but for a man to sing well is not enough. He who would claim my hand must prove himself cleverer than I. Go from my presence. I give you ten hours. If you can hide from me before those ten hours have passed, I will spare your life, and take you for my husband.'

John went out into the Fairy Helena's garden, and sat himself under a tree. How could he hide from her, who, to find him, had but to open her magic book? He bewailed his lot, he cursed the demon. 'See now, demon, what comes of doing you a good turn! Did you say I should never regret it? Don't I regret it now? I am to lose my head, and all because of you!'

Whooh-hooh! Crick-crack! A crackle of sparks and a puff of smoke. There stood the demon.

'What's fretting you now, John?'

'What's fretting me, indeed! I must die, and it's all your doing!'

'No, John, you mustn't die. *I'll* hide you.'

Then the demon turned himself into an eagle, and took John up in his talons. He flew with John up and up, beyond

the moon, beyond the sun, beyond the stars. He laid John down on the milky way, and spread his wings over him.

'You are safely hidden, John.'

But the Fairy Helena opened her magic book and turned the leaves. It was all written down: John lay on the milky way under the wings of an eagle.

'Eagle, descend! I see you. And I see the man who lies under your feathers.'

So the demon came down with John into the Fairy Helena's garden. Says he, 'We're not beaten yet, John! We have still nine more hours to hide you in. So what does he do? He gives John a pat on the face, and turns him into a tiny pin. He changes himself into a bee, takes the pin in his mouth, flies into the Fairy Helena's chamber and sticks the tiny pin into the cover of her magic book.

The Fairy Helena turns the pages of the book: nothing is written there concerning John. She studies the book for hours. She learns nothing. 'Do you fail me at last, my book?' The tenth hour arrives. She is angry. She flings the book from her; it drops on the floor, the tiny pin falls out of it—and there stands John.

Was she angry, or was she glad that she must not cut off his head? Yes, in her heart she was glad. So she smiled and gave John her hand.

'I am clever, John,' said she; 'but it seems you are cleverer. Come, I take you for my husband.'

So they were married. And John lived happily, oh so happily, with the Fairy Helena in her palace above the clouds.

The Three Lemons

There was a young prince, handsome and brave. And when he was fully grown, the king, his father, said to him, 'Take a wife, my son, that I may see you blessed, and give you my blessing before I die.'

The prince said, 'My father, I would gladly take a wife; but where shall I find one?'

Said the king, 'Do none of the lovely ladies in the land please you?'

And the prince said, 'No, not one.'

The prince went out and sat in the garden. He was sad, thinking about the wife he could not find. And there came to him a fairy in the guise of an old woman. And the old woman said, 'Go to the glass hill, pluck the three lemons, and you will find a wife such as your heart desires. And when you have found her, you can call me to the wedding.'

The prince said, 'By what name shall I call you?'

'By any name you please,' said she.

And she nods to him, and disappears.

The prince went to his father, and told him what the old woman had said. 'Who she is, I know not,' says he, 'but it seems she held my fate in her hands. I would journey now to the glass hill.'

The king said, 'But where is this glass hill?'

And the prince said, 'Nay, I know not. But to seek is to find.'

So the king gave the prince his blessing. And the prince mounted his horse and set out.

He rode, rode; he searched, searched, but he didn't find the glass hill. He rode till he came to a place where no man lived. And the sun scorched him, and he was weary. So he got off his horse and went to rest under a lime-tree.

And as he flung him down, twelve ravens that were perched on the tree flew up and away. They flew away towards the north. The prince watched them fly. Said he to himself, 'For many a weary day I have seen no living creature. I will go in the direction of the birds' flight, and maybe some hope will reveal itself.'

So he got on his horse again, and rode away northward.

He rode among mountains for three days and three nights; and then he came to a mighty castle made of lead. Round the castle flew the twelve ravens; and before the castle gates stood an old, old woman, leaning on a leaden staff.

'My lad, my lad,' said the old woman, 'why have you come to a place where no man comes? Ride away if life be dear to you! Or when my son comes home he will swallow you alive!'

But the prince said, 'Little mother, give me counsel. For I seek and seek, and I cannot find. I seek the glass hill and the three lemons.'

The old woman said, 'Nay, how should I know where such things be? My son may know, for he ranges far and wide. Stay then, if you dare, and when my son comes home, I will ask him.'

The old woman took the prince into the castle, and hid him in a corner behind a great broom. Then the mountains quaked, and the earth trembled. And the old woman whispered, 'Keep still, lad—that is my son coming!'

The castle gates burst open, and in stamped a giant carrying a great leaden club. The prince looked through the twigs of the broom. He shuddered. He did not reach to that giant's knees.

'Foh! Foh!' shouts the giant. 'I smell human flesh! Set it before me, Mother, that I may eat!'

'Ah no, my son, I entreat you!' said the old woman. 'There has come a handsome lad who craves your counsel.'

'Well then, let him show himself!'

'But only, my son, if you will not hurt him.'

'Well then, I won't hurt him. But let him show himself!'

The prince came out from behind the broom. He was trembling.

The giant shouted, 'Beetle, beetle, what are you afraid of? Who are you? Where have you come from? What do you want?'

'I am a prince. I come from a far country. My fate said to me, "Go, seek the glass hill and the three lemons." I have wandered, wandered; but what I seek I cannot find.'

'And how can I help you?' says the giant. 'I who know of no such things! You must go to my brother in the silver castle. Maybe he can tell you. Nay, and you shan't go hungry. . . . Mother, out with the dumplings!'

The old woman set a large dish of dumplings on the table.

The giant sat down and began to eat. 'Come, eat up, beetle, eat up!' he shouts to the prince.

The hungry prince bites at a dumpling. He breaks a tooth. The dumplings are made of lead. He sets down his knife and fork.

'Eat, eat!' roars the giant. 'Why don't you eat! Are my dumplings not good enough for you?'

And the prince answers, 'They are indeed good. But I don't want any just now.'

'Well then,' roars the giant, 'if you don't want any just now, put some in your pocket and be off with you!'

The prince was glad enough to go. Willy-nilly he must take some lead dumplings with him. He rode on and on among the great mountains. Gloom behind him, gloom before him; not a living creature to be seen. And at last, being weary, he dismounted, and flung himself down under an oak-tree.

And as he flung him down, four and twenty ravens flew up from the tree and away towards the north.

'A sign! A sign!' cried the prince.

And he rose up and journeyed on in the direction of the birds' flight.

Gloom behind him, gloom before him, not a living creature to be seen: only through the gloom the croaking of the ravens. He rode and he rode for three days and three nights. He came to a plain among the mountains, and a light shone through the gloom to dazzle him. A castle towered up before him. The castle was built of silver; and round it flew the four and twenty ravens.

Before the gates stood an old, old woman, leaning on a silver staff. 'Ah, my lad, why have you come here, where no man comes? Flee away if life be dear to you. Or when my son comes home he will swallow you alive!'

But the prince said, 'Little mother, I don't think your son will eat me. I bring him a sign from his brother in the leaden castle.'

And he showed her the dumplings.

The old woman took him in then. No, she had never heard tell of the glass hill and the three lemons. But she would ask her son. And meantime she hid the prince under the bed.

Then the mountains quaked, and the earth trembled; and in strode a giant carrying a silver club. 'Foh! Foh! There's human flesh here! Bring it out that I may eat!'

'Nay, dear son, it is a handsome youth seeking counsel. He brings you a greeting from your brother of the leaden castle.'

'Well, if my brother hasn't eaten him, neither will I. Let him come out that I may see him!'

The prince came out from under the bed. The giant towered over him like a tall pine-tree. The prince couldn't help but tremble.

'Little flea, little flea,' says the giant, 'what are you afraid of? Who are you, and what do you want?'

The prince told him. But the giant had never heard of the glass hill and the three lemons.

'You must go to my brother in the golden castle,' says he. 'But stay, you shan't go hungry. Mother, out with the dumplings!'

The old woman sets the dumplings on the table. They are made of silver.

'Eat!' shouts the giant.

And the prince answered, 'I am not hungry just now. But by your leave I will take some for the journey.'

'As many as you like!' roars the giant.

So the prince put some of the silver dumplings into his

pocket, thanked the giant and rode on his way. He rode and he rode, for three days and three nights. The thickly wooded mountains were all round him. He saw no living soul. Should he go to the right? Should he go to the left? How could he tell? Wearied out, he dismounted and flung him down under a beech-tree.

And up from the tree rose six and thirty ravens, and flew away towards the north.

'A sign!' cried the prince. And he got on his horse again and rode on after the ravens.

So he came down into a valley, and in the valley was a wide meadow. And on the meadow stood a castle that shone like the sun itself. It was pure gold.

Round the castle flew the six and thirty ravens, and at the castle gates stood an old, old woman, leaning on a golden staff.

'My lad, my lad, why have you come here where no man comes? Flee away, if life be dear to you; or when my son comes home he will surely eat you!'

'No, he won't eat me, little mother. I bring him greetings from his brothers.' And the prince showed the old woman the lead dumplings and also the silver ones. 'I seek the glass hill and the three lemons, if you know where they are?'

No, she didn't know, but her son could tell him. He could see over all the world, and knew everything. 'But hark! here he comes! I must hide you!'

She hid the prince under the carpet. The mountains quaked, and the earth trembled: in stamped a giant carrying a golden club. And if the other giants had been big, this giant was bigger.

'Foh! Foh! I smell human flesh. Set it before me that I may eat!'

'Nay, nay, my son. It is a handsome youth come seeking your counsel. He brings a greeting from your brothers.'

'Well, if they haven't eaten him, neither will I. Show him to me!'

The old woman lifted the carpet. The prince stood up. The giant was a mountain that towered over him.

'Little speck of dust, why do you tremble. Who are you? Where have you come from? And what do you want?'

The prince told him. The giant picked the prince up in his palm, and carried him to a yard behind the castle. 'See that little black hummock over there?'

The prince looked where the giant pointed. He saw a great black mountain whose top was hidden in the clouds.

'That is the glass hill,' said the giant. 'On the top of the hill stands a tree, and on the tree hang three lemons, whose scent spreads for seven miles round. Go up the hill, kneel under the tree, and hold out your hands. If the lemons are for you, they will fall into your hands. If they are not for you, you won't be able to pluck them, whatever you do. If you get the lemons, and if on your way back you should feel hungry or thirsty, cut one of the lemons in two, and you will have all the food and drink your heart can desire. Now, be off with you! No, wait, you mustn't go without a meal!'

The giant carried the prince back into the castle, and roared out, 'Mother, serve the dumplings!'

The old woman brought out a golden dish filled with dumplings.

'Eat, eat!' roared the giant.

But the dumplings were made of solid gold: the prince couldn't so much as bite into one. So he said he found he had no appetite.

'Then take some for your journey,' shouted the giant. And he stuffed a great handful of the golden dumplings into the prince's pockets.

Every pocket the prince has on him is now bulging full of heavy dumplings—lead, silver, and gold. The dumplings weigh him down; it is all he can do to get on his horse.

'Good luck to you!' roars the giant.

'Good luck to you!' shrills the old woman.

And the prince rides on his way.

Well, he rode and he rode; and as he drew near the glass hill, the air was filled with the scent of the lemons that grew on the summit of the hill. But when the prince came to the foot of that glass hill, his heart sank. The sides of the hill rose up and up and up, smooth and black and slippery; there wasn't a crack or a foothold anywhere. The prince set his horse at the hill, and the horse did his best; but he slithered and came to ground again.

'I am not a fly,' said the horse, 'to walk on a window.'

So then the prince dismounted and took a run and a jump at the hill. He clawed with his hands, he clung with his knees, he curled up his toes—all no good! Every time he got up a little way, down he came again, *bump*, till his back was bruised and his head span, and he scarce could tell where he was, or what he was doing.

So he rested a bit, and then thinks he, 'It's these accursed dumplings weighing me down!'

And he took a lead dumpling out of his pocket and threw it at the hill in his vexation.

What did he see? He saw the dumpling stick to the glass and turn itself into a step. He threw a second dumpling and a third: and there were three steps. Then he blessed the dumplings and the giants who had given them to him: and he went up the three steps.

He threw a fourth dumpling, and there was a fourth step. He threw a fifth: a fifth step. And so up and up he went, throwing the dumplings ahead of him, first the leaden ones, then the silver ones, and then the gold ones—and got a staircase right up the hill.

So he came to the top; and there was the tree, and growing on it the three lemons whose scent spread for seven miles round. The prince kneels under the tree, holds up his hands: immediately the three lemons fall from the tree into his upturned palms.

Crack! The tree vanished, the glass hill vanished: the prince found himself standing on a grassy plain. The three

lemons were in his hands, and his horse stood close by, nibbling the grass.

Away rode the prince on his homeward journey. He galloped, galloped for three days and three nights; he was so joyous that he didn't think about eating or drinking. But with the fourth day came raging hunger and burning thirst. So he remembered what the giant with the golden club had told him, dismounted, took a lemon out of his pocket, and cut it in two.

And lo! out of the lemon springs a beautiful maiden.

'Prince,' says the maiden, 'have you made ready for me to eat? Have you made ready for me to drink? Have you made ready pretty dresses for me to wear?'

And the prince answers, 'Alas, no! I have nothing for you to eat. I have nothing for you to drink. I have nothing for you to wear. Only stay with me, I pray you, stay! And I will bring you to my father's palace, where all these things shall be given you.'

But the maiden clapped her hands three times, curtsied to the prince, and vanished.

The prince was so disappointed that he felt like weeping. But he ate and drank from the cut lemon, and his hunger and thirst went from him. So he rode on.

He rode, rode, for three days and three nights. And then again hunger and thirst raged in him, and he cut the second lemon.

Out from that lemon sprang a maiden more than beautiful. The prince gazed at her with ravishment. But the maiden said:

'Prince, have you made ready for me to eat? Have you made ready for me to drink? Have you made ready pretty dresses for me to wear?'

'Alas, alas!' said the prince. 'How can I make anything ready for you in this wilderness? But stay with me, only stay! In my father's court you shall have all these things!'

And he sought to take the maiden in his arms and set her

on his horse. But she slid through his hands like a water drop, and vanished.

The prince shed tears. But he ate and drank from the cut lemon, and his hunger and thirst went from him.

Now he had but one lemon left. 'And though thirst should burn me up, and though hunger destroy me,' said he, 'I will not cut open this last lemon till I reach my father's palace!'

On rode the prince, on, on, and farther on, for three more days, and so at last reached home. He scarcely knew how he got there, for he was worn out and faint with hunger. The old king, his father, embraced him with tears of joy; they set food before him, he ate and drank, and then went to his bed and slept long and happily, with the precious third lemon under his pillow.

The next day the prince ordered beautiful dresses, richly adorned with jewels, to be got ready. And a banquet was prepared to which all the court lords and ladies were invited. When they were seated at table, the prince stood up, took the last lemon from his pocket, and cut it in two.

You can guess what happened. Out of that lemon sprang a maiden. And if the other two maidens had been beautiful, this third maiden outshone the other two as the sun outshines the stars.

'My prince, have you made ready for me to eat? Have you made ready for me to drink? Have you made ready pretty dresses for me to wear?'

'Yes, yes, my beloved! All is made ready. Behold the meat, behold the drink, behold the pretty dresses!'

'Then you are mine, and I am thine,' said the maiden.

And they clothed her beautifully, and she ate and drank. And that very day she and the prince were married.

Well, they hadn't been married very long when the old king died, and the prince became king in his stead. Then a neighbouring king declared war and our king must summon his army and march away to battle. Sorely he grieved to leave his lovely queen.

'My queen,' said he, 'shall I find you here when I come back?'

The queen laughed. 'Why, where else should I be?'

And the king sighed and said, 'I don't know. I don't know. But I tremble for your safety.'

So what did the king do but build an ivory tower beside a lake in the garden. The tower was raised on four golden pillars, and none could get into it save by a silken ladder let down from above. The king had the rooms in the tower fitted out in grand style, and brought the queen there with her maidens.

'Here, in this tower, you will surely be safe!' he said.

But he had forgotten one thing. He had forgotten the old fairy who had told him about the glass hill and the three lemons; and to whom, of course, he owed his happiness. He had so utterly forgotten her that he had not called her to the wedding, and now she meant to punish him for his rudeness.

So she sent her daughter to draw water from the lake, and told her what else she must do.

The girl went to the lake with her pitcher. She set down the pitcher and began to sing. And the queen looked out of the tower window.

'Oh, how beautiful you are, how beautiful!' cried the girl. 'But why are you so neglectful of yourself? You would be a thousand times more beautiful if you would let me come up and dress your golden hair!'

'Well then,' laughed the queen, 'come up and dress my hair.'

So the queen let down the silken ladder and the girl climbed up.

And the girl combed and brushed the queen's golden hair and plaited it very skilfully. But she left one strand unplaited. Said she, 'Take a mirror now, my queen, and see for yourself how my hairdressing becomes you!'

The queen looked in the mirror and smiled. 'Yes, you have done it beautifully,' she said. 'But you have been somewhat careless. See, you have left one little strand hanging down.'

'Oh, we will soon put that right!' said the girl. And she took a silver pin which the old fairy had given her, and thrust it into the queen's head.

The queen gave a little scream. 'Take it out, girl!' she meant to say. But all she *did* say was, 'Take two-oo, Taffy! Take two-oo!' For she had turned into a white dove, and the dove flew out of the window.

Then the girl dressed herself in the queen's clothes.

And her maidens whispered together, 'How grieving for the king has altered our queen! One would hardly know her!'

The king came back rejoicing. He had conquered the enemy; and now he need never part from his queen again! And his queen came down from her ivory tower to meet him.

His queen! Could it be his queen? 'My queen, my queen, how you have changed!' he cried.

'I have changed, my beloved, I have changed!' said she. 'I have wept and wept in my ivory tower till all my beauty was washed away in tears. But now you are home again! And my beauty will return.'

But her beauty did not return. Nor was her voice kind, nor were her manners comely. The bewildered king moped. He could neither eat nor sleep. All his happiness left him.

And one day, as he was walking in the garden, this sad, sad king, a white dove flew down on to his hand from a high tree. The dove looked up into the king's eyes, oh so sadly!

'Ah, my dove,' said the king, 'are you also unhappy? Has your mate also changed from fair loveliness into common clay? You and I, my dove, you and I, let us comfort each other!'

And he stroked the dove's soft head.

What did he feel under his hand? Something that surely should not be there! He parted the pretty white feathers on the dove's head—and there was the pin!

'So that is the cause of *your* unhappiness, my dove! Well, I will ease you of your pain, even if I cannot ease my own.'

And he pulled out the pin.

In an instant the dove disappeared, and there before him stood his beautiful wife. She told him all that had happened, and they went back to the palace together. And who should meet them on the palace steps but the old fairy, holding her daughter, the false queen, by the hand.

'King,' said the old fairy, 'remember in future to thank those who have helped you.' And when she had said that she vanished, and the false queen vanished with her.

From that time forth our king and his lovely queen reigned long and happily. And some folk say they are living and reigning still.

The Adventures of Pengo

I. PENGO AND THE GIANTS

Once upon a time there was a king who ruled over a poor little kingdom, and the time came for him to die. So he called the three princes, his sons, to him, and said, 'My sons, there is a promise I would have you give me, so that I may die happy.'

The sons said, 'We will promise anything that gives you happiness.'

The king said, 'Promise me that every evening you will cast away all that you wear and all your personal belongings. Keep nothing overnight. Renew everything in the morning. For this will bring you great good fortune.'

The sons said, 'We promise.'

The king smiled and said, 'When the good fortune has come to you, you shall be free of your promise.'

And then he blessed his sons, and died content.

Now those three princes were good lads. They kept their promise, though they couldn't see what good it would do them. In fact, it seemed to be doing them harm. For it was but a little poor kingdom their father had left them, and which they governed now in friendly wise between them. And the little poor kingdom had but a little poor treasury. And what with the cost of renewing all they wore and all their personal belongings every day, the small amount of gold that there was in the little treasury got less and less, till there was none left.

Said the eldest prince, 'Brothers, this won't do! The good fortune our father promised us is going farther and farther away. Come, let us now set out and seek that fortune which is evading us.'

The other two princes agreed; and they appointed a governor for the little kingdom, and set out. They had to walk, they had not one horse left to them. They had only their swords and their bows and arrows.

So the eldest prince shot an arrow and said, 'We will follow this arrow, and where it falls to the ground we will rest.'

And they walked for a day and a night, and came upon the arrow at last stuck in an oak-tree. So they made a fire under the oak-tree, sat down, and ate some of the food they had brought with them. And it was evening.

The eldest prince said, 'Now brothers, you two lie down and sleep. And I will keep watch.'

So the two younger brothers lay down and slept. And the eldest stood up against the oak-tree with his sword drawn in his hand. And at midnight a monstrous boar with golden tusks rushed from behind the tree to attack him. But the prince fought with the boar and killed it. And he pulled out the golden tusks of the boar and kept them. But the body he buried.

And all this time the two younger princes slept on, for they were very weary.

In the morning they all three took the road again. And the middle brother shot an arrow from his bow and said, 'Where this arrow falls, we will rest.' And they followed that arrow for three days and three nights, and on the fourth evening they came upon it stuck in the cleft of a rock under a mountain. So they made a fire by the rock, and sat down and ate.

And the middle brother said, 'Now it is my turn to watch.' And he stood up against the rock with his sword in his hand: and the eldest and the youngest brother lay down and slept.

At midnight there flew down from the mountain a monstrous vulture, with two silver feathers on his head. And the vulture attacked the prince; and the prince fought with the vulture and killed it.

And he pulled out the two silver feathers from the vulture's head and kept them; but the body he buried.

And all this time the eldest and the youngest brother slept on.

So in the morning they three took the road again. And the youngest brother, whose name was Pengo, shot an arrow from his bow and said, 'We will make no stop nor stay till we come to where this arrow has fallen.' And they followed the arrow for seven days and seven nights, and came up with it on the eighth evening, lying in a wood.

So they made a fire in the wood and sat down to eat. And Pengo said, 'Tonight it is my turn to watch.'

The brothers said, 'Nay, you are too young, Pengo.'

But Pengo answered, 'If I am old enough to seek my fortune with my brothers, I am old enough to keep watch for them.'

So they let him be, and lay down to sleep.

Pengo walked to and fro in front of the fire till midnight; and then from far away among the trees he heard a sad little song. And he went towards the sound of the song, and came to a brook, and saw, on the bank of the brook, a little golden fish struggling in the mud. So he picked up the little fish and put it back in the brook. And the fish gave Pengo one of its golden scales and said, 'When you find yourself in trouble, Pengo, blow upon the scale, and I will come to your aid.'

So Pengo put the golden scale in his pocket and went back to where his brothers were sleeping.

Hey ho! The fire has gone out! Now in the morning his brothers would tease him and say, 'When we said you were too young to watch, didn't we speak truly? You couldn't even keep the fire alight!'

What should he do? He had no tinder box; his eldest brother had that, and Pengo wouldn't wake him. So he climbed a tree and looked around him, to see if there was any dwelling near where he could borrow a burning brand.

Yes, there in the distance he saw a light flaring up and flickering down: the light of a fire. So he set off through the wood to reach the fire and borrow a burning brand.

And on his way through the wood he met Midnight, spreading darkness round him.

Says Pengo to Midnight, 'I pray you stay where you are and spread your darkness round you, that my brothers may not wake before I come back with a burning brand to rekindle our fire.'

Says Midnight, 'I do not stay beyond my time; for Dawn comes presently.'

Says Pengo, 'You shall stay till I return.' And he took Midnight and bound him to a tree, and went on. And on his way he met Dawn, coming towards him.

Says Pengo to Dawn, 'I pray you do not walk a step farther until I return, lest your light should shine on my brothers and waken them.'

Dawn said, 'I will not stay. My times are ordered.'

Says Pengo, 'You shall stay till I return.'

And he took Dawn and bound her to a tree, and walked on, till he came to where the fire was burning. And round the fire sat twelve giants, roasting an ox.

Says Pengo, 'I pray you lend me a burning brand, for my fire has gone out.'

Said the giants, 'Before you get a brand you must pay for it.'

Says Pengo, 'What must I pay?'

Said they, 'You see that castle yonder, and you see a cock that keeps watch on the castle wall?'

Says Pengo, 'Yes, I see the castle wall and I see the cock, for a moonbeam strikes them.'

Said the giants, 'Draw your bow and shoot the cock.'

So Pengo set an arrow to his bow, and took aim at the cock. And the arrow pieced the cock through and through, so that it fell from the wall dead.

And Pengo said to the giants, 'Tell me, why did you want that cock killed?'

And one of the giants answered, 'We are the twelve servants of the Span High Man, and he has bidden us to steal

three princesses from the castle: one for his own bride, one for the bride of his elder son, the boar with the golden tusks, and one for his younger son, the vulture with the two silver feathers. We have been waiting till all in the castle slept that we might steal the princesses. But the cock kept crowing to waken the guard, and so we have waited in vain. Now we will go quickly.'

'Oh, ho!' thinks Pengo. 'Go you quickly, go you slow, two of those princesses will lack husbands! For my brothers have slain both boar and vulture!' But all he said was, 'How will you get into the castle, if the gates are fast locked?'

And the giant answered, 'Little bratling, we will take you along. We will put you up on the castle wall, and you shall go down into the court and open the gates for us.'

Says Pengo, 'I will go with you, since I can no other.'

So the biggest of the giants took Pengo up in his fist, and they all twelve set off for the castle. And the giants were whispering over Pengo's head, and their whispers were like the roar of the sea, and Pengo heard what they were saying: 'When we get inside the castle we will kill this bratling, so that the honour of stealing the princesses may be ours alone.'

So they came to the castle, and put Pengo up over the ramparts, and all the guards within were sleeping like dead men. So Pengo went down inside the castle to the court, and came to the great gates. And the giants were waiting outside the gates.

'Are you there, bratling?' said they in their roaring whispers.

'Yes, I'm here.'

'Then open the gates and let us in!'

But Pengo said, 'The key is too big, I can't turn it. And the bolts are too heavy, I can't draw them. But there is a wicket here I can open, and if you stoop down you can crawl through one at a time.

So the giants went down on their hands and knees to crawl through the wicket. And Pengo stood inside the wicket with

his sword in his hand. And as each giant came crawling through, Pengo cut off that giant's head, and dragged his body inside. And so he did with all the twelve.

Then he went from the court into the castle, and came to the room where the three princesses lay asleep, each in a golden bed. And from the first princess he took a handkerchief, and from the second he took a bracelet, and from the youngest he took a lock of her golden hair, cutting it off with his sword, as it lay spread out over the pillow. And after that he left the castle and went back through the wood. When he came to the giants' fire, he took a burning brand; when he came to where Dawn was bound to the tree, he unloosed her and set her free; when he came to Midnight, he did the same. And so returned to where his brothers were sleeping. And when he had rekindled the fire, he woke them.

Said they, 'This has been the longest night that ever we slept through!'

And Pengo answered, 'You may well say that! You have been asleep for seven nights and seven days!'

And he told them all he had done.

Now when the king of the castle rose in the morning and found the twelve giants dead in the courtyard, with their heads cut from their bodies, and when the princesses told him that someone had been in the night and taken from them a handkerchief, a bracelet, and a lock of hair, the king said, 'My children, this is the doing of some hero, who has saved you from the Span High Man and his servants the giants. If I knew who that hero was, I would reward him greatly!'

So what did the king do but set up an inn for travellers at the crossroads, and the rule of the inn was that every traveller must earn his night's rest by telling his life story. And it wasn't long before the three princes came to the inn, and were thankful enough to get free food and lodging, for they had no food left, and no money in their pockets.

So they told their stories from their first setting out, and indeed from before that, for they told of the promise they

had given their father. And the eldest prince told how he had killed the boar, and he showed the king the golden tusks. And the middle prince told how he had killed the vulture, and he showed the silver feathers. And Pengo told how he had killed the giants, and he showed the three tokens he had taken from the princesses.

And the king said, 'In return for what you have done, I will give you my three daughters in marriage, if you and they can agree amongst yourselves.'

Well, they soon agreed amongst themselves; for the princesses looked upon the princes as heroes; and the three princes thought the princesses wonderfully beautiful. So they held three weddings, and Pengo got the youngest princess, who was the one with the golden hair.

And the king loaded up the princes with a hundred times as much treasure as they had lost by keeping their promise to their father; and he sent them back to their own kingdom, each one driving a golden coach with his princess up beside him; and in front of them he sent a regiment of soldiers and a baggage train of riches, to announce their coming into their own kingdom. . . .

Is that the end of the story? No, it isn't. There's a lot more to come.

2. PENGO AND THE SPAN HIGH MAN

Well, there are the three princes driving along, each in his golden coach with his wife up beside him. And by and by they come to the brook where Pengo had found the little golden fish struggling in the mud. There is something struggling in the mud now, but it isn't the little fish: it's a tiny mannikin. And if that mannikin is a span high, he isn't any more.

'Help, help, help!' shrieks the mannikin, floundering in the mud.

But the eldest prince, in the first golden coach, didn't give that mannikin a glance. He passed him by.

'Help, help, help!' shrieks the mannikin, as the second prince, in the second coach, came by.

But the second prince said to himself, 'I don't like the look of that mannikin!' And he gave the mannikin a poke with his whip, and pushed him farther into the mud.

'Help, help, help!' shrieks the mannikin, as Pengo in the third golden coach, comes by.

So Pengo steps down from his golden coach and drags that mannikin out of the mud.

Lack the day! The mannikin takes a leap into Pengo's coach, and drives off faster than any wind blows. One moment the coach is seen tearing away; the next moment it is out of sight. Yes, Pengo, has lost his wife. And the Span High Man has got her.

So there stands Pengo, nigh out of his wits with grief: his golden coach and his wife have vanished in one direction; and the regiment of soldiers, and the baggage train of treasure, and the golden coach of the first brother, and the golden coach of the second brother are all going farther and farther away in the other direction.

Did Pengo find himself in trouble now? He did indeed! And he thought on what the little golden fish had said: 'Pengo, when you find yourself in trouble, blow upon this scale and I will come to your aid.'

So he took the scale out of his pocket and blew on it. And there was the little golden fish poking his nose up out of the brook.

'In trouble, Pengo?'

'In sore trouble, little fish. The Span High Man has stolen my wife, and I don't know where he has taken her.'

'I don't know either,' says the little fish. 'But on that mountain yonder there lives a sage who knows everything there is to know, all but three things. We must go and ask him.'

'*We* must go, little fish?'

'Yes,' says the little fish. 'I'm coming with you. Do you see there under the rushes a little glass jar? Take it up, Pengo, swill it out, fill it with clear water, and put me in it. Then you can carry me along.'

So Pengo did that. He took the jar, swilled it out, filled it with clear water, put the little fish in it, tucked the jar in his pocket, and set off for the mountain. And the little fish spoke up out of Pengo's pocket and said, 'You'll find the sage a bit grumpy, Pengo.'

Well, Pengo climbed up the mountain, and at the top there was the sage sitting on a huge stone. And if the stone was grey, the sage was greyer. And he was more than grumpy.

'Oh, so your wife's been stolen from you, has she? Well, *my* wife was stolen from *me* three hundred years ago; and ever since then I can't rise from this stone. How would *you* like to sit on a stone for three hundred years? But you don't care anything about my wife, and I don't care anything about your wife—though I know where she is.'

'Oh, where?' cries Pengo.

'Shan't tell you,' says the sage. 'Why should I? Nothing for nothing is what *I* say! You get my wife back for me, and then I'll tell you.'

Pengo says, 'Where is your wife?'

'Now see here,' says the sage, 'I know all things there are to know, barring three things. But one of the three things I don't know, is where my wife is.'

'Then how can I get her back?'

'That's your affair,' says the sage. 'Don't bother me! I won't listen to you! I won't speak to you!' And the sage put his fingers in his ears and scowled at Pengo.

So Pengo went away down the mountain, and the little fish spoke up out of the jar.

'Pengo, I know where the sage's wife is. She's imprisoned in a witch's castle. But to get her back will be the hardest bit

of work you've ever done, or ever you're like to do again.'

'I'll do it or die!' says Pengo.

'Good for you!' says the little fish. And he told Pengo the way to go, and it wasn't long before they came to the witch's castle. It was a diamond castle, very handsome; but there didn't seem to be anybody about.

'Pengo,' says the little fish, 'leave me in my jar, here in the courtyard, and go in. You may be hungry and you may be thirsty, and there'll be food in plenty. But you must neither eat nor drink till everything is white. Till then, whatever befalls you, suffer all in silence. Otherwise it will be all over with you, and you and I will never meet again. Now give heed to what I've told you, Pengo!'

'I will give heed to it, little fish,' says Pengo.

And he set down the little fish in its jar in the courtyard and went into the castle.

And everything was black. There were black rooms, black chairs, black tables, and black food in plenty set out on the tables. But Pengo didn't eat or drink. He passed on, and came to a black bed in a black room. And he lay down on the bed, thinking to sleep, for it was night.

But he didn't sleep. There came black phantoms and beat him with black rods all night long, till his body burned and his bones ached. But he didn't cry out: he suffered all in silence.

So at cockcrow the black phantoms vanished, and Pengo rose up. He felt like a dead man.

And now everything was red: red rooms, red chairs, red tables, red food in plenty; and hunger raged in him, but he didn't eat. All day he wandered through the red rooms, and at night lay down on a red bed. Then came red phantoms and beat him with red rods, and they hurt him more sorely than the black phantoms had. But he suffered all in silence.

So at cockcrow the red phantoms vanished, and Pengo lay with his eyes shut; he had no strength to move. But what did he hear? A sound of sweet singing! He opened his eyes: he

was lying in a white bed in a white room, and beautiful white phantoms moved about the bed, singing and stroking him with soft hands till all his pains went from him. And he rose up, and walked through white rooms and came to a white table spread with white food and jugs of milk.

And he ate and drank.

And so, feeling as well as ever he had in his life, he went out into the courtyard.

And the little fish spoke up out of the jar.

'Well done, Pengo! Now the witch has no power over you. Go to the stables, and you will find a mare tied in a stall. That mare is the sage's wife. The witch has turned her into a mare to draw her carriage. The witch is in the stable, too; she is buzzing about in the shape of a gadfly to suck the mare's blood. You must kill that gadfly, Pengo!'

So Pengo went into the stable, and there was the mare, and there was the gadfly squatting on the mare's neck, drinking her blood. The mare whinnied and stamped and tossed her head; but she was tied fast by her halter in the stall, poor thing. When the gadfly saw Pengo it buzzed up over his head and made for the door. It knew it had no power over him, he having endured the rods. But Pengo gave a leap, caught the fly between his palms, and squashed it.

The gadfly fell to the floor. Only it wasn't a fly that lay on the floor: it was an old hag of a witch. And she was dead.

And there, tied up in the stall, was a handsome young woman with a halter round her head.

Pengo made short work of taking that halter off. And then he and the little fish and the young woman, who was the sage's wife, went back up the mountain.

The sage leaped from the grey stone and took his wife in his arms. He was all smiles and good temper. 'Now I will tell you where *your* wife is,' says he to Pengo. 'The Span High Man has taken her to the ninety-ninth island of the sea. But to conquer the Span High Man you must know where his strength lies.'

'And where does his strength lie?' says Pengo.

'Can't tell you,' says the sage. 'That's the second of the three things in the world I don't know.'

Says Pengo, 'And what is the third thing?'

'How you're to set about it all, of course,' says the sage. 'But now, don't bother me any more, I must take my wife home.'

Then the sage covered his wife with a corner of his mantle, leaped on to the stone, and struck the stone with his foot. The stone sank into the mountain, and the sage and his wife sank with it. And there was Pengo left standing alone with his glass jar.

'Little fish, what shall I do next?'

'Go back to the brook and follow it down to the sea, that we may set out for the ninety-ninth island.'

'Little fish, I can't swim so far as the ninety-ninth island.'

Said the little fish, 'I will get you there.'

So down went Pengo from the mountain, and came to the brook, and followed the brook along its winding course to the sea. And when he stood on the sea-shore, the little fish said, 'Put me in the sea, Pengo.'

So Pengo put the little fish in the sea, and it swam away, and Pengo stood forlorn. But he wasn't standing forlorn many minutes before the little fish came swimming back, and behind him came swimming a great whale.

'I've brought you my brother, Pengo,' says the little fish. 'He'll take us to the ninety-ninth island.'

Then Pengo got on the whale's back, the whale took the little fish in his mouth, and off with them, faster than fast, to the ninety-ninth island.

The ninety-ninth island was all rocks and barrenness, with one little stone cottage built above the beach. Pengo went into the cottage, and there was his wife. She was looking pale and miserable, but she cheered up when she saw Pengo. She told him that the Span High Man was gone to the sixty-sixth island, where he always rested for his noonday sleep.

Says Pengo, 'When he comes home you must find out where his strength lies, that I may kill him.'

And she said she would.

Then she gave Pengo some food, and after he had eaten, he went out to hide among the rocks. The whale swam about among the islands with the little fish in his mouth, and Pengo's wife tidied up the cottage and decked it with shells to make it look gay.

So by and by, in whizzed the Span High Man. He was in a good temper, seeing Pengo's wife so cheerful.

'Darling,' says she, 'you are very, very small, and yet you must be very, very strong, the way you whizz about the world. Tell me, where does your strength lie?'

The Span High Man grinned. Says he, 'My strength lies in that piece of wreckwood behind the door.'

So next day, when the Span High Man had whizzed off to the sixty-sixth island for his noonday nap, Pengo's wife takes the piece of wreckwood, dusts it, polishes it, and lays it away in a chest among sweet herbs. And when the Span High Man came back, he says, 'Where's that wreckwood?'

And she shows him. 'Your strength is too precious to lie about in the open,' says she.

The Span High Man screeched with laughter. 'Silly wench, my strength isn't in that piece of wood, it's in the broom there!'

So the next day, when the Span High Man was gone to the sixty-sixth island, Pengo's wife took the broom, polished it, and laid it away in the chest among the sweet herbs on top of the wreckwood.

'Where's that broom?' says the Span High Man when he comes home.

She showed him, and he laughed till the tears ran down over his beard. 'Silly wench, my strength isn't in the broom, it's in the poker.'

So the next day Pengo's wife did the same by the poker. She washed it, and polished it, and laid it away among the sweet

herbs in the chest along with the broom and the wreckwood. And when the Span High Man came back, and asked where the poker was, she showed him. And again he screeched with laughter.

Said she, 'Why do you laugh? Haven't I told you that your strength is too precious to lie about uncared for?'

'No more it does,' says he. 'I carry my strength with me wherever I go. Come, give me a kiss, and I'll tell you all about it.'

So she kissed his horrid little face. It cost her a pang, but she did it.

So then he rubbed his stiff little beard across her face and said, 'My strength lies in my beard.'

'Without a word of a lie?' says she.

'Without a word of a lie,' says he. 'So where I am, there my strength is; and no one can take it from me.'

And all that evening he was on at her, boasting about his beard till she fair sickened. But she flattered him, and kept him in a good temper. And next day, when he went off to the sixty-sixth island for his noonday sleep, she ran to tell Pengo.

Pengo took a pair of shears, called the whale, and off with him to the sixty-sixth island. And there, on a patch of white sand, the Span High Man lay on his back, sound asleep.

Pengo with the shears tiptoes up to him. *Snip! Snap!* The beard is off. The Span High Man leaps up with a squeal, but his squeal is no louder than a bat's squeak. And if he was small before, he is smaller now. He is dwindling, dwindling, dwindling: he isn't even a mannikin any more. He is nothing but a little grey feather.

And Pengo picks up the feather and blows it out to sea.

Then back quick, quick, to the ninety-ninth island, to fetch his wife. And on to the whale's back with the pair of them, and over the sea to home. And when they landed, the little golden fish pops out of the whale's mouth.

'Good-bye, Pengo!' says the little golden fish.

And 'Good-bye, Pengo!' says the whale.

And 'Good-bye both!' says Pengo. 'And may the good Lord heap blessings on you for all you've done for me!'

The little golden fish swam off and so did the whale. And Pengo and his wife walked on towards home. They had a long walk of it, but it didn't seem so long to them, because they were happy. And they got to their own kingdom at last, and were received by Pengo's two brothers and their wives with all the joy in the world. With the wagon loads of treasure the two brothers had brought home, they had put the little kingdom to rights. The treasury was fuller than full, and the elder brother said, 'We are released now from the promise we gave to our father, because good fortune has come to us.'

And the second brother said, '*Come* to us! Nay, rather we went forth to get it!'

And Pengo said, 'That is what our father, the king, meant. If we had stayed at home in our poor little kingdom, scrimping and scraping to pay our way, we should have been but royal beggars when all was done. But by keeping our promise we lost the little all we possessed, and so we had to bestir ourselves.

'Yes, brothers, our father, the king, was wise.'

Gisella and the Goat

Once upon a time there were seven musicians. They were brothers, and their sister kept house for them. The brothers earned a poor living playing for the country folk, but they didn't earn much, and they didn't like being poor. They didn't like it that they couldn't have good things to eat and nice clothes to wear, and that they couldn't dress their sister up in pretty garments.

So one night the sister went up to bed, and left her seven brothers sitting round the fire. There they were, grumbling about their hard lot, when there comes a knock at the door.

'Come in! Don't stand knocking!'

In comes a queer looking man, wrapped up in a shabby cloak. Yes, he was a demon. And if the brothers didn't know it at once, they soon had a good guess. For says the demon:

'Poor and don't like it, eh? Well, well, I can change all that for you. I'll build you a castle overnight, and give you so much treasure that you'll be the richest fellows in the land. Of course, there's just one little condition.'

A condition? And what was that condition? Oh well, the brothers knew there must be a catch in it somewhere! Did the demon want their souls? If so, he shouldn't have them. No, not at any price! And so they told him.

'Oh no, nothing of that sort,' says the demon. '*I'm* no collector of souls! I only just want you to promise that your sister shall never marry.'

Was *that* all! And to be rich, and live in a castle, and give their sister everything she wanted, except a husband! Yes, yes, the brothers would promise that, and their sister was a sensible girl, she would agree, of course she would!

'Then come outside,' says the demon.

The seven brothers went outside with the demon. There

was a great stretch of waste land outside their cottage. The demon put two fingers to his lips and whistled. My word! Up on the waste rose a magnificent castle, with rows and rows of windows glittering in the moonlight, with dozens of splendid rooms, with stables and outbuildings, with horses and carriages, with maid servants and man servants, with fields, farmland, sheep and oxen.

'You'll find the castle cellars stacked up with treasure,' said the demon. 'Good night to you—and remember your promise!'

Then off went the demon; but where he went I couldn't tell you. The brothers didn't know, nor did they care. They called their sister, and they all went into the castle. From that night they lived like lords, with feasting and merrymaking, and throwing of gold about, and everyone bowing and scraping to them. And the host of friends they had, you wouldn't believe!

Now amongst those friends was a pleasant young squire. The brothers liked him and welcomed him; they didn't heed at all that he was falling in love with their sister. But she heeded it. And when the young squire asked would she marry him, she said, 'Yes, I will.'

And she went to tell her brothers.

'Oh, you can't do that!' cried they. 'We promised you wouldn't!'

'But *I* never promised anything,' said she. 'And marry my man I will!'

They begged and implored her not to; but she was stubborn—well, who wouldn't be?—she would, she would, she *would* marry her man! And in the end the brothers had to give in, and the wedding day was fixed.

Such a wedding feast! The tables laden with choice foods in gold and silver dishes, flunkeys in silk stockings and green velvet coats hurrying about, hundreds of guests, the brothers and the bridegroom dressed like princes, the bride in her gossamer veil, her snowy robes and her softly gleaming pearls—a dream to behold. All going merrily!

But then—oh dear—what about that demon?

'A stranger to see you, my lords,' whispers the head butler to the seven brothers.

The brothers hurry into an anteroom. There sits the demon, muffled up in his old cloak.

Did he rate those seven brothers? Did he not! Hadn't he given them all? And was this the way they kept their promises? No use for the brothers to chatter about the wilfulness of women! The demon knew all that! But they had broken their word, and now—let them look out! Yes, if their sister gave birth to a son, then let them look out!

And when he has said that, off stalks the demon, very dignified. And the brothers go back to the wedding feast, and try to forget that the demon has ever called upon them.

The sister and her husband lived very happily in the castle. And in due time the sister gave birth to a little son. A lovely little boy, nothing wrong with *him*! He lay in the cradle for three days, cooing to himself.

But on the fourth morning when the mother goes to lift him out of the cradle—heavens, what does she see? No beautiful baby, but a little billy-goat! And the little billy-goat jumps out of the cradle, and prances about the room, calling out, 'Give me food! Give me food!'

'I have milk for you,' says the poor mother, half fainting.

'No, no, *no!*' cried the little billy-goat. 'Give me gold, give me silver!' And seeing a gold cup and a silver jug standing on the table, what does he do but knock them off the table and swallow them both.

After that there was no holding the little goat. He ran through the castle, gobbling up every gold and silver thing he set eyes on. And still he cried for more gold, more silver; and in less than no time he was not a *little* goat any longer, he was a full grown one.

The brothers said, 'This can't and shan't go on!' And they brought grass and corn and tender tree shoots to the goat, and said, 'Eat this, this is the food goats thrive on.'

But the goat said, 'I must have gold, I must have silver! If you don't give it to me, I shall have to swallow all you seven brothers! I shall have to keep swallowing you and spitting you up and swallowing you again, until I am disenchanted. And when will that be? Oh, when will that be? The one is not yet born who can take my enchantment from me!'

Well, the brothers didn't want to be swallowed down, even if they were to be spit up again, so they had to let that goat go his own way. Soon he had eaten all the gold and silver in the castle: the vessels, the ornaments, the frames of the mirrors, the gold table legs: he had eaten, too, all the pile of gold and silver money in the castle cellars. Nothing was left: not a single gold piece, not a silver sixpenny.

So then the brothers, terrified lest they be swallowed down themselves, had to sell first their oxen, then their sheep, then their horses and carriages, in exchange for gold that the goat might eat. And the goat ran about eating all day long; but at night he went out and wandered away, no one knew where.

The brothers said to the sister, 'Where does that goat go at night?'

'I don't know,' said she. 'I asked him once, but he butted me in the stomach. I shan't ask him again.'

The brothers said to the sister's husband, 'Where does that goat go at night?'

'I don't know,' said he. 'I asked him once; but he butted me in the back, knocked me over, and left me senseless. I shan't ask him again! If you want to know, ask him yourselves. But one thing I *will* tell you. If my wife has another baby and it turns into a goat, I shall leave you! Yes, I shall set out into the world and leave you all!'

The brothers felt desperate. What could they do? Should they kill the goat? No, they couldn't! After all, they were his uncles, weren't they? They had to remember that he had once been their sister's little baby.

'Well then, let's follow the creature and see where he goes at night,' said one.

So that night the brothers took off their shoes and crept out in their stockinged feet. In the starlight they could just see the goat moving away over the fields that had once been full of cattle and now were empty and growing rank. The goat moved on to an old quarry place, and there he stopped. The brothers hid themselves behind some bushes on the edge of the quarry, and watched.

What is the goat doing? He is digging up the earth and stones with his horns. And when he has dug up earth and stones—now what is he doing? He is spitting up gold and silver and burying it. And he is talking to himself—oh, so sadly!

'If my parents and my seven uncles only knew where I've put all this treasure, they wouldn't be so grieved. But alas, alas, I dare not tell them. For if I tell them, the demon will take me away to be his riding horse in hell.'

So, when the goat had finished spitting up gold and silver, he tossed the earth over it with his horns, and then he went back to the castle.

The brothers came out from behind the bushes. They ran down into the quarry, they dug up the gold and silver. They dug and dug, and still they found more gold and silver, and more and more! All that the goat had ever swallowed was buried there. The brothers filled their pockets, their hats, their stockings, their handkerchiefs, and went home rejoicing.

And after that, they lived without a care. Let the goat swallow what he would! The brothers had only to go and dig it up again after the goat had buried it.

So by and by their sister had another baby—a girl. A real little beauty! But would that little beauty one day turn into a nanny-goat? Her mother trembled and watched. But the days passed, and the months passed, and the years passed: the lovely little girl, whom they christened Gisella, was still a lovely little girl.

And Gisella and her brother, the goat, played together.

But one day little Gisella couldn't find brother goat, and she ran out into the castle gardens looking for him. She ran

all round the gardens, and then, behind a hedge, she heard someone crying. It was brother goat crying, and he was talking to himself.

'Oh, how lucky is my dear little sister! She is a human being, and everybody loves her. But as for me, nobody wants *me*—the ugly goat! Ah, if my little sister only knew that I could be disenchanted, she would go to the Cloud King and ask his advice. But I dare not tell her. If I tell her the demon will take me to be his riding horse in hell.'

Little Gisella went softly away. 'Now my darling little brother, I know what I must do!'

And when the goat came out from behind the hedge to play with her again, Gisella said, 'Brother, I'm going to the Cloud King.'

Said the goat, all surprised, 'Why go to the Cloud King?'

Said Gisella, 'Because I had a dream last night. I dreamed that I saw the Cloud King and he said, "Gisella, Gisella, come to my house. I have something to tell you." And so, brother, I shall set out tomorrow.'

The goat skipped for joy. He hadn't told Gisella anything—and yet she knew! He said, 'If you are really going to the Cloud King, listen to what I say. If on your journey you should meet anyone—either beast or man—who would give you advice, look carefully at his left foot. If he has a left foot bound up, or if that foot is a duck's foot, take no heed of what he may say; pass by quickly, for his advice will be evil, and meant to ruin you.'

'I will do as you say, little brother,' said Gisella.

So next morning, Gisella set out on her journey to the Cloud King. She walked a long way, and as she was going through a wood, she met a limping fox.

Said the fox, 'Whither away, lovely little maiden?'

Said Gisella, 'I journey to the Cloud King.'

Said the fox, 'I know the quickest way to his house. Come, I will lead you!'

But Gisella looked down at the fox's left foot, and sure

enough there was a bandage round it. So she laughed and said, 'I don't need a lame leader. I shall go quickly. I can't wait for limping folk.'

And when she said that, the fox vanished.

So on goes Gisella through the wood. And by and by a raven flies over her head and perches on a tree.

Says the raven, 'Whither away, lovely little maiden?'

'I journey to the Cloud King.'

Said the raven, 'I myself am journeying to the Cloud King. I am carrying a message from my master the King of Night. Now I will fly just over your head, and show you the way.'

But Gisella looked up at the raven's feet, curved over a tree branch. The raven's left foot was a duck's foot! So she laughed and said, 'Fly you alone. *I* need no one to lead me!'

And when she said that, the raven flew off croaking.

On goes Gisella, a long way, right through the wood; and then, being tired, she sits down under the very last tree in the wood to rest. A road ran past the wood, and along this road came four prancing black horses drawing a lovely little carriage. In the carriage sits a young man, handsome as the dawn. Abreast of Gisella he pulls up the horses.

Says he, 'Whither away, lovely little maiden?'

Says she, 'I journey to the Cloud King.'

'Ah, the good omen! I shall pass his house, I will drive you there swiftly. Jump into my carriage, lovely little maiden! You need not walk a step farther.'

Oh, but the young man is handsome! Oh, but the young man is kind! Oh, but Gisella is tired, tired! Surely now she may ride! She takes a step towards the little carriage: the young man gets up to help her in—what does she see? His left foot is wrapped up in a silken bandage.

Away leaps Gisella from the side of the carriage. 'No, no, I won't ride with you. I see you are not well. You've hurt your foot. I don't travel gladly with sick people.'

And when Gisella said that, the young man drove off furiously, with a cloud of dust swirling up behind him.

Gisella walked on and on. At the end of the road she came to a mountain; and down from the mountain flew a white dove, and perched on her shoulder.

'Whither away, lovely little maiden?'

'I journey to the Cloud King.'

'Then follow this foot-path, it will lead you to his house.'

Gisella took the white dove in her hand. She looked at its feet. Two lovely little dove's feet, pink and perfect!

'Thank you, little dove. I'll go along the foot-path.'

The dove flew away. Gisella went on up the foot-path. She came into a thick cloud, and through the cloud she saw the sparkles of a fire. She came out of the cloud, and there was a cave with a fire burning in front of it, and twelve wolves lying by the fire. When the wolves saw Gisella, they got up and howled; and out of the cave came a blind grey man.

'I am the Cloud King, and you are Gisella. I know why you have come.'

Then the Cloud King gave Gisella a corked bottle. 'Take this home,' said he, 'and when you reach the one you would help, uncork the bottle and tip what it contains over him. You have come a weary way, but your journey home shall be an easy one. Good-bye, little Gisella!'

Then the Cloud King called the south wind, and the south wind lifted Gisella and carried her home.

The goat was wandering in the garden, looking up at the sky. Was he looking for Gisella? Yes, he was. The south wind set her down at his feet. Gisella uncorked the bottle, and tipped the bottle over the goat's back.

And out of the bottle pours a black, black cloud. Gisella can see nothing. But the black, black cloud drifts up, drifts away. Gisella can see again now. But where is the goat? There isn't any goat! Where the goat had been, stands a handsome smiling boy.

Yes, the demon's enchantment has come to an end; and so has the story. And hand in hand, two happy children run to tell their mother.

Kate Contrary

Once upon a time there was a labourer called Joe, and he had a wife who went by the name of Kate Contrary.

I tell you, that woman earned her name! Whatever Joe wished, she wished the opposite. When he would go to bed, she must stay up; if he wished to get up, she must stay in bed. If he thought it was dinner time, she said, no, it wasn't. When he would go to work, she grumbled, 'Work, work, work! Will you never let it be?' When he would rest, she shouted, 'You lazy vagabond—here am I slaving away and you sit twiddling your thumbs!'

So one day when Joe thought to have his breakfast she screamed out, 'Greedy guts! You think of nothing but your stomach!'

And she threw the porridge pot at him.

Well now, the porridge was all over the floor. Joe didn't get any breakfast. So he went off into the wood to look for blackberries.

He came to a blackberry bush, a monstrous one, with the

berries on it all black and shining. He was just about to pluck and eat, when he saw, hidden away under the branches, a deep, deep, dark hole.

'Ah!' thinks he, and back home with him.

'Wife,' says he, 'don't you go into the wood to look for blackberries.'

'And why not?'

Says he, 'Because I don't want you to.'

Says she, 'Then go I will, you old bugbear.'

And she goes, with him after her.

They come near to where the blackberry bush is, and Joe says, 'Wife, I see some fine blackberries over there, but don't you go picking them!'

'Yes, I will then, I'll pick the bush clean. And I'll not leave you a single berry!'

And she runs to the blackberry bush and pushes in under the branches, never heeding the prickles. She's shouting out, 'Don't you come near the bush, or I'll kill you!'

When—flop with her down into the deep, deep, dark hole.

Joe went home. He was joyful, with the peace all round him. But after three days, he begins to think. 'I hope she didn't break her bones, my old woman. I hope she isn't starving. I best go and pull her up again.'

So he takes a long cord, goes to the bush, and lets the cord down into the hole.

Something caught hold of the cord: and that something was whimpering.

Says Joe, 'Is that you, old woman? Maybe you've learnt your lesson! Hang on, I'll pull you up.'

So he leaned back and pulled up the cord, hand over hand.

But it wasn't Kate Contrary he pulled up. It was a little demon.

'Ho, ho!' says Joe. 'I didn't think to see the likes of you come up! You best go back where you belong.'

And he caught hold of the little demon to throw him down into the hole again.

But the little demon shrieked and fell on his knees. 'Don't send me back, Joe! Don't send me back!'

Says Joe, 'Why not?'

Says the demon, 'Because your wife's down there. She won't give me a moment's rest. She scolds and bites and pinches. I'm black and blue! I'm worn out! Let me go away into the world! I'll do you a good turn, I'll make you rich, I promise you!'

So Joe let the little demon go where that little demon would.

The little demon went to town. He changed himself into a sweet cake, and put himself on a plate in front of a rich merchant's wife. The rich merchant's wife ate the cake. Was she ill? She came near to dying. So the demon whizzed off to Joe, and whispered in his ear. And then back with him, and *hop!* into a phial of medicine the merchant's wife was drinking to ease her pains.

The medicine didn't ease her pains. She got worse and worse. So then our Joe, as the demon had advised him, got him a black gown and went to the town, claiming to be a doctor. He was let go upstairs to the merchant's wife, where she lay on her bed, moaning and groaning. He sprinkled a few drops of water on her lips, and *pop!*—out flew the demon like a little breath of air. For so it had been arranged between them.

So then Joe got a big reward, and went home well satisfied.

But it didn't stop there. The demon turned himself into an apple this time, and another rich merchant's wife ate him and took to her bed, moaning and groaning. All the doctors in the town could do nothing for her; but Joe came and cured her in a trice; because, when he sprinkled water on her lips, the little demon flew out of her.

The little demon made a good thing of it for our Joe. All the wives and daughters of the rich merchants were falling sick, tormented by the little demon they had eaten in one shape or another. Joe cured them all like winking with his

drops of water. He didn't ask payment, but he took whatever the grateful husbands and fathers and brothers and sons of the sick women lavished on him. He became rich and famous, everyone was sending for him; he gave up labouring, moved into town, and lived in great style.

But one day the demon came to him and said, 'Man, our little game is at an end. You've got riches enough now to last you your life. And I've a plan for myself to live in peace. There's a nobleman's daughter whom I fancy. She's going to eat me in a plate of sweetmeats. *And I'm not coming out any more.* You just try curing her! I'll lay seven plagues on you—see if I don't!'

Well, Joe didn't trouble his head about that. As the little demon said, he was rich enough for anything. But, oh dear, soon after this, the nobleman's daughter went crazy. And, of course, since no one else could cure her, the nobleman sent for our famous doctor.

What to do now? The famous doctor was sorry for the poor girl, that he was. And besides, he didn't want to lose his good name. But then, how could he cure the girl, if the little demon wouldn't come out of her? And what about those seven plagues the little demon had threatened Joe with?

Joe thinks and thinks. He lies awake all night thinking. And then he has an idea. So he goes to the nobleman.

'This is a bad case,' says he. 'The sickness won't leave the girl for any medicine the world holds. If I'm to cure her, you must let me set about it in my own way.'

Said the nobleman, 'Set about it how you will—only cure her!'

So Joe called the townspeople together and bid them gather in front of the nobleman's house. He got foot-soldiers and horse soldiers to surround the house. The soldiers had guns, and the townspeople were carrying whips. Joe had a whistle and that was to be a signal. When he blew it, the soldiers were to fire blank cartridges, and the people were to crack their whips and shout what he'd told them.

When all is arranged, Joe goes up into the sick girl's room, leans from the window and blows the whistle. And immediately the soldiers began to fire and the people to crack their whips and everyone roared out till the town echoed, 'Kate Contrary has come! Kate Contrary has come!'

So then Joe goes to lean over the crazy girl, and the little demon jumps out of her mouth. He was gnashing his teeth at Joe and screaming, 'Why have you come here? Didn't I tell you our game was at an end? I'll eat you, I will!'

'Well, well,' says Joe. 'I don't want to turn you out. I only came to tell you the latest news. But you can hear for yourself. They're shouting it loud enough down in the street.'

The little demon rushed to the window. He saw the soldiers firing their guns, he saw the people cracking their whips and he heard them shouting, 'Kate Contrary has come! Kate Contrary has come!'

'Oh, oh!' cried the little demon in a fright. 'Where can I hide from that terrible woman?'

'Well, if I were you,' says Joe, 'I'd run back into that deep hole. She won't go there any more.'

So the little demon ran and jumped into the hole. And what he met with down there, we're not told. But of course the nobleman's daughter recovered that very minute. Joe got her in marriage, and he got a great lump of the nobleman's property as well.

The Lost Children

There were two little children, a boy and a girl. Their mother was dead, and their father was a woodcutter. He spent all his days in the forest with his axe, and the children ran wild. Thinks he, 'I am not doing right by my children, they need a woman to look after them. I must marry again.'

So he looks about for a wife. But he being poor, there were not many women would have him; and he had to be content at last with a shrew of an old maid from the village. *She* was willing enough! Bless my soul, that she was! But she was a sour-tempered jealous old thing, and she hated the children because their father loved them.

So one day when the woodcutter was away in the forest as usual, the old thing screws up her face into a smile, and says to the children, 'Come along, my pretties, we'll go off into

the forest and find your daddy. Look, I've made him a nice little cake!'

So off they went, the children pleased as pleased, and the old scarecrow of a stepmother grinning to herself over what she meant to do. Yes, she was going to lose those children in the forest. That's what she was going to do!

And she led them away, far, far from where she knew their father would be working.

'Sister,' said the little boy as they went along, 'I had a lovely dream last night. I dreamed we were both dressed in silk and velvet, and we lived in a great house in a beautiful city. The house was all gold, and as we went along the street to the gold house, all the people in the city came running to welcome us.'

'I should like that,' said the little girl. 'Was our daddy there?'

'I don't know,' said the little boy.

'Was *she* there?' whispered the little girl, nodding her head at the stepmother.

'Oh no, no, no!' said the little boy. '*She* wasn't there! She wasn't anywhere.'

Then the little girl's legs began to ache, and she said, 'I'm tired!'

That was what the stepmother wanted, she had made them walk a long way on purpose. So she said, 'Well, sit you down, the two of you, here under this tree. I'll go on and find your daddy and give him the cake.'

And off she went, and disappeared among the trees, and took a loop round, and home with her by another path.

It was late when she got home, and the woodcutter had finished his day's work. He was in sitting by the fire. 'Wife,' says he, 'where are the children?'

'What,' says she, 'haven't they come home?'

'No, they haven't,' says he.

'Well then, the little monkeys must be playing around somewhere,' says she. 'They'll come in when they're hungry.'

But the children didn't come. The woodcutter went out, searching and calling. He sat up all night; he wouldn't go to bed though his wife scolded at him. He waited around all next morning, and still the children didn't come. He went into the forest searching—not a trace of the children. But whilst he was gone, the wife took one of the little girl's petticoats and one of the little boy's shoes, dabbled them over with the blood of a chicken she had killed, and hung them on a thorn bush at the entrance to the forest. The woodcutter found them on his way back, and burst into tears. 'Oh, my children, my children, have the wild beasts eaten you?'

And he lived in misery.

And the children, tired of waiting under the tree, were wandering, wandering, deep, deep in the forest, far beyond the places where their father had searched for them. And at the very end of the forest they came to a hut.

At the door of the hut stood a funny old woman with a red nose and her head tied up in a blue handkerchief.

'Oh, oh!' said she. 'Too bad! Too bad!'

Said the little boy, 'What's too bad?'

Said the old woman, 'Oh, oh—too bad! Too bad! You are so young and pretty, you shouldn't die!'

The little girl laughed. 'We're not going to die, granny!'

'Oh yes, you are,' said the old woman. 'Because my brother is a dragon, and when he comes home he'll eat you. . . . No, no, he shan't then! Granny will hide you!'

And she took the children into the hut, gave them each a hunk of bread, and hid them in two sacks behind the wood pile.

Then came a roaring and a whizzing and a blustering in the forest, as if a great wind were rushing through the tree branches. The hut door banged open and in flew the dragon. He dropped a big parcel on the floor. He was panting, and the sweat was running down over his snout. He wiped his snout with his clawed front foot and laughed. He was very excited.

Says he, 'I've been all the day fighting. A hard fight it was, but lucky come to the end. Me and the magician of the mountains have been at it tooth and claw: but I beat him, ah ha! I beat him! And see what I've got!'

The dragon opened his parcel: inside were three things, a little carpet, a mirror, and a silver flask.

'The flying carpet,' says he, his huge mouth all agrin; 'a flask of the water of life, and the mirror which sees everything. With these three things I shall be the greatest dragon that ever lived! I shall be master of the whole world! . . . Only the trouble is that each new owner has to wait seven years for the magic things to begin working. Can't be helped. I've got 'em, and I'll keep 'em. And—pooh!—what's seven years?'

'Nothing in the life of a dragon,' says the old woman. 'Come, eat your supper.'

She set a cauldron of meat on the table, and the dragon gulped everything down in three swallows. Then he lay on the floor and thumped with his tail. 'Mightiest dragon on earth!' says he. 'Master of the whole world!' And after he had said that a few times, he drew down the scaly lids over his fiery eyes, and fell asleep.

The old woman sat by the fire in a rocking-chair. She rocked herself asleep. Dragon and old woman were both snoring now.

The children came out of their sacks behind the wood pile. They crept across the floor. They picked up the carpet, the flask and the mirror, and tiptoed to the door. But the door was fast shut and they couldn't open it. What could they do? Now if the dragon woke, they were lost indeed!

So as they stood there fiddling with the latch, a brindled cat came out from a corner and whispered, 'I can open the door, and I will open the door; but only if you'll take me with you.'

'Of course we'll take you, pussy,' whispered the little girl.

So then the cat gave the door a tap with her tail, and the door swung open. Off ran the little girl, the little boy, and the

cat, and never stopped running till they were far, far away.

In the morning, when the dragon woke, he rubbed his eyes with his tail, and gaped.

'Hey, old woman, what have you done with my things?'

The old woman took a quick look behind the wood pile. Yes, the children were gone, and the magic things were gone. The old woman was glad that the children had taken them and got away. So she said, 'Things! What things?'

'The carpet, the mirror, and the flask, you stupid!'

'You've been dreaming,' says the old woman.

'I haven't been dreaming,' shrieked the dragon. And he lashed the floor with his tail till the dust flew up. 'See, there's the cloth I brought them in!'

'I see the cloth,' said the old woman, 'and a dirty old cloth it is; but I don't know nothing about mirrors and things.'

'But I showed them to you!' shrieked the dragon.

'No, you didn't, then,' says the old woman.

The dragon rushed at the old woman to knock her down, but she skipped away behind the wood pile. 'Now, now,' says she, 'don't get excited. You know my memory's none too good. Maybe you did show me them things—or maybe you didn't. How's an old body to remember last night, when it's this morning? Come now, eat your breakfast like a good boy.'

But the dragon wouldn't eat his breakfast. He swore that the wizard of the mountains must have come in the night and stolen back the treasures. 'I won them in fair fight,' he screamed, 'and I'll win them again!' And off he flew to the mountains and fought with the wizard all day: and came back in the evening without the things. Well, of course he did, because the children had got them.

So now we must see what those children are up to.

Well, they went on and they went on for several days, and the brindled cat went with them. The cat caught a mouse or two, and the children ate berries; and they were all getting thin, when they came to a pretty lake with a nice bit of grass on its margin, and a little wood beyond the grass plat.

And the cat said, 'Here we must stay for seven years and wait for the magic to work.'

So they built a little hut of tree branches and lived there. They caught fish in the lake, and the cat went into the wood and caught pigeons. She found eggs too, so they didn't want for food. The years passed, the children grew strong and handsome; and when their clothes were all worn out, the girl (she was a big girl now) made them dresses out of pigeon feathers.

One day she said, 'Pussy, surely seven years must have passed. What about the magic?'

The cat went to look behind the hut. There were some little sticks there standing in a row, and she counted them. Said she, 'Every year when the larks began to sing, I put a stick in the ground. Now there are seven of them, so the seven years have passed. We can look in the mirror and see what our fathers are doing. You can look first. Hold the mirror so that the sunlight shines into it, and say, "*Light that looks on all, show us what we most wish to see*".'

Well, the boy and girl did that. They turned the mirror to the sun, and said the words. At first they saw nothing but sparkles of light, rising and falling: and then the sparkles of light ran together and made a picture.

Look! There is their home. Their father is sitting by the fire. He looks into the glowing embers, and he is grave and thoughtful. Then he lifts his head and smiles. Can he see his children? Who knows? Perhaps he can. But where is the stepmother?

The scene in the mirror shifts: there is the village now, and there the church; and in the churchyard a grave with a wooden cross. *That* is where the stepmother is, lying under the wooden cross, for her name is on it. Ought the boy and girl to feel sorry? No, they can't feel sorry. They think their father must be happier alone.

'Now we will look for *your* home, pussy!'

And they said the words again, and turned the mirror to

the sun. What did they see when the sparkles of light ran together and made a picture? They saw a beautiful city, and in the city a great golden palace. And the boy cried out, 'Sister, sister, this is the place I dreamed of long ago!'

The picture in the mirror changes: it shows them a room in the golden palace; and in that room, on a silken bed, a majestic old man with a long grey beard, lies dying. Oh, what does it mean? And what is the little cat doing?

The poor little cat is sobbing as if her heart would break.

'Pussy, pussy, what's the matter?'

And the cat sobbed out, 'That is my father who lies dying. Yes, I was a king's daughter! The magician of the mountains stole me away out of spite. He turned me into a cat and sent me to live with the dragon. . . . But oh my father, my dear, dear father!'

The boy took the little cat in his arms. 'Don't cry, pussy dear, all will be well. We'll sit on the magic carpet, we'll fly to the city, we'll give the king to drink from the flask of the water of life. We'll cure him, pussy, see if we don't!'

And he kissed the cat's soft little tear-drenched cheek.

Oh! Oh! What does he hold in his arms now? No brindled cat but a beautiful princess! Yes, there was magic in the boy's kiss. It has broken the magician's spell.

So then they took the flask and the mirror and all three sat on the flying carpet. Away they went through the air, and soon they saw below them the white walls of a great city, and the golden domes and spires of the king's palace. The carpet set them down in a wood outside the city. The boy left the princess and his sister in the wood. He took the flask and walked on into the city. He knew his way well enough, for it was indeed the city he had dreamed of.

So he went to the palace and asked to see the king.

They said, 'No one can see him!'

He said, 'I have brought medicine to heal him.'

They said, 'The king is dying. It is too late for medicine.'

He said, 'My medicine will raise up the dying.'

'Well then, you can but try.'

And they brought the boy to the king.

The boy leaned by the bed; he put one arm under the king's shoulders; he raised him up:

'Sir king, drink from my flask!'

The king drank. Wonder of wonders! The colour came back to his cheeks, the light to his eyes. He leaped from the bed, danced about the room, flung his arms round the boy, kissed him again and again. 'Lad, dear lad, you have saved my life! You shall be my son, and half the kingdom is yours!'

Then his rejoicing people came and dressed the king in his royal robes, and the boy said, 'My king, a great joy awaits you. Come with me to the wood outside the city gates.'

The king with a splendid train of courtiers went with the boy to the wood. And the princess and the girl in her feather dress came running to meet then. So, with joy unbounded, with huzzas and singing, they all returned to the city. They brought the boy and girl to the golden palace, they dressed them in silk and velvet: yes, it was all just as the boy had dreamed it long ago.

So then the boy married the princess, and the girl married a duke. They sent for the woodcutter, and the king made him an earl. King and woodcutter, boy and princess, girl and duke— in that golden palace they are living happily to this day.

Why, of course they are! The water of life is theirs, you see.